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ABSTRACT

The articles in this journal issue focus on adolescent literature. In the first article, author Sue Ellen Bridgers explains how she writes books, while the second article offers an analysis of the recent works of Paul Zindel. The third article presents a discussion of the treatment of outsiders, such as the mentally ill, in four Roy Brown mysteries. The fifth article deals with the image of the teacher in adolescent fiction, and the sixth provides a personal perspective on the works of Robert Cromier. The seventh article traces the theme of disillusionment and despair from J. D. Salinger's "Catcher in the Rye" to Cromier's novels. The issue also contains a review of media materials for use in teaching adolescent literature, brief reviews of new books, and summaries of presentations given by authors at a recent meeting in Canada. (FL)

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People, Families, and Mothers

Sue Ellen Bridgers

I don't suppose any of us object very much to being identified with our professions. A writer, because of the elusive nature of literary success, feels especially gratified by recognition. "Oh, you're a writer," a new acquaintance acknowledges. Or better yet, "Oh, you're the writer." (What a difference an adjective makes!) This is heady stuff, although the letdown that follows can be anticipated by any writer who has a modicum of success:

Still we nod and smile, waiting all the while for the two-fold question that is bound is follow and leave us wrecked. "Are you working on anything?" I am asked. Too often I am forced to say "No, I'm on vacation," a response that makes me long for a decent explanation for very sporadic work habits. As it is, people think I vacation a lot.

Of course, occasionally I do find myself answering, "Yes," speaking I suppose with a hint of smugness because I like referring to writing as work and because long vacations are embarrassing. And yet, I answer also with regret, knowing in advance the second question that will come flying my way with such seeming harmlessness. "What's it about?" invariably hits in the chest, taking my wind and demanding a most complicated, even impossible, answer. Knowing how difficult it is to find words that actually convey the contents of two hundred and fifty pages, I never ask another writer what his work is about, and since no other writer has asked me either, I always presume the innocence of the asker. After all, no one inflicts an unrequired needle on a patient; nobody throws salt on a wound, do they?

Some non-writers sense that, and so they edge apologetically into the inevitable. "Could you possibly tell me what your new book is about?" And since the enquirer seems genuinely interested and asks so warily, as if he can't resist what might be an invasion of privacy akin to peering uninvited into my refrigerator, I try to answer. "The new book is about people," I say.

Ah, you think, she is hedging. She is politely refusing. Not true. If I could tell the reader what the book is about, if I could move swiftly, unerringly to the heart of the matter, I would never write the book. I could perhaps review it or teach it or theorize about it, but I could never write it.

Of course, that is obviously not true for all writers. Many have describable plots, some even have outlines, many have purpose beyond exploring the characters who people their work. I do not. I am painfully short on plot, although I do understand that the book must be about something. Apart from the people in it, I cannot seem to focus on the particulars, the ideas, the symbols, the philosophy, that the reviewers discover for me. In the reviews of both *Home Before Dark* and *All Together Now*, I read some wonderfully succinct and accurate observations about the content of the work—things I knew but could not freely and objectively express.

But now I am cornered. Having initiated the forbidden subject myself, it becomes a point of pride to think over three books written—the third just now meeting the public—and decide what they are about.

Home Before Dark is about a family, an ordinary family except that they are migrants, rootless except for the father who has a sudden, inexplicable hankering for home. It is about two brothers, alienated by time and events, who are willing to risk knowing and trusting each other again. It is about two women, one a wife and mother living on the edge of fear, unable to cope beyond her meager understanding of a day-to-day existence; the other, willing to accept, even encourage, the fate she sees ambling toward her. It is about two boys who want the same girl because for both of them, but in different ways, she represents a new perspective in their lives, a step into the deep waters of the adult world. And the girl. It is about Stella finding a place to be, about discovering potential.

But that is who the story is about, not what. I will try again, this time with *All Together Now* which people tell me is about community. I would have said it is about truly knowing other people. It is about accepting people as they are and loving them in spite of themselves. That is what Casey and Dwayne do for each other. It is the key to Pansy and Hazard's reconciliation; it brings Taylor and Gwen back together. It is the sustaining fact of Jane and Ben Flanagan's marriage. But as the writer, I saw that idea as a result, not the cause. Casey said to her grandmother when they were taking Dwayne Pickens away to an institution, "How can we let him go when we know him?" Casey was asking that question of me as well. On page 191 of a 238 page book, I found out what the story was about. Better late than never.

But was my finding out, much less stating it explicitly, ever really important? Comments from readers are always so varied, proof that readers bring their own experiences to their interpretations of what a story is about. They don't need me to tell them once they're reading. I consider it wasted ef-

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WELCOME BACK, ZINDEL

John A. Davis, Indiana University of Pennsylvania

SOME years ago one of the more popular TV situation comedies was a show called "Welcome Back, Kotter." It chronicled the antics of a group of unruly, undisciplined, unmotivated but lovable Brooklyn high school students and the efforts Mr. Kotter, a Social Science teacher, to ease their way into adulthood. I would occasionally ask my Adolescent Literature classes to view one or two of the episodes when we were discussing stereotypes in adolescent fiction, or when the portrait of the teacher became too Machiavellian; for week after week Kotter reassured his adolescents through their identity crises, their confrontations with adult authority, their reluctant acceptance of adult responsibility.

I have most recently been reminded of the show as I read the two adolescent novels published by Paul Zindel in 1980: *The Pigman's Legacy* and *A Star for the Latecomer*, the latter written in collaboration with his wife, Bonnie. What called to mind the Kotter show, and particularly the show's theme song which welcomes Kotter back to where his talents are truly needed, is that in these two novels Zindel seems to have also come back where he is needed after something of a departure in *Pardon Me, You're Stepping on My Eyeball* (1976) and *Confessions of a Teenage Baboon* (1977). This is not to say that these novels were not written for an adolescent audience, or that they were not read by the thousands of Zindel admirers, or that they failed to show an acute understanding of the adolescent experience. It is to say that Zindel's 1980 novels seem more akin to the vintage Zindel of *The Pigman* (1968), *My Darling, My Hamburger* (1969) and *I Never Loved Your Mind* (1970), an avuncular Zindel always nearby, always compassionate, always understanding, and above all, always reassuring his charges that although adolescence was a time of turmoil and stress they could meet it.

Pardon Me, You're Stepping on My Eyeball and *Confessions of a Teenage Baboon* seem hybrid Zindel. Marsh Mellow and Edna Shinglebox of *Pardon Me* and Chris Boyd of *Confessions* appear to be condemned to a legion of the damned with Zindel standing at the gates of Hell watching his progeny enter with no reassuring word or quip to alleviate their misery. The hybrid Zindel of these two books is a grafting of a Zindel who could balance the trials of his adolescents with humor, irony, and optimism—as he did in his other novels—to a Zindel who seems possessed of a Dostoevskian mood of gloom and despair.

Before attempting to demonstrate what I have suggested above, let me remove *The Undertaker's Gone Bananas* (1978) from the discussion. This book was advertised as Zindel's first murder-mystery and so it was. It is fast paced and roundly humorous but reveals only tangentially the character and persona of the adolescent. The usual concerns of Zindel's adolescents are subordinate to a Hardy Boys concern to unmask a killer. I read it as a deliberate departure by the author from his earlier novels where the adolescents were victims of their own frustrations; here Zindel used the macabre figure of a murderous undertaker to hound his adolescents. Perhaps the book was an exercise in restorative therapy, a kind of literary purgative for the agony of his two previous novels.

Certainly *Confessions* and *Pardon Me* show marked kinship to all of Zindel's novels. A survey of his twelve-year migration over the adolescent landscape will reveal the unique Zindel features found in all his novels. He unfailingly has pursued similar themes throughout. He has cast his dramas with like characters: the lost, lonely, becalmed, frightened, and frustrated adolescents. He peoples his books with dishonest parents or authority figures whom few of his adolescent characters hope to emulate. He accentuates the natural loneliness of the adolescent by the cruelty and indifference of ruthless parents and peers. He breaks the family bonds by death, divorce, or desertion. And in all, humor and irony intrude.

Zindel has a favorite storehouse of themes which he fictionally depicts from a Pandora's Box of adolescent anxieties, fears, dreams, and failures. One of the more persistent themes was elaborated initially in *The Pigman* where John Conlan and Lorraine Jensen recoil in horror at the prospect of reaching adulthood and acquiring its inevitable accretion of hypocrisy, deceit, and self-delusion as palliatives. John muses, "Maybe I would rather be dead than to turn into the kind of grown-up people I know." Maggie Tobin in *My Darling, My Hamburger* sees the penalties as well as the inevitability of having to accept an adult role in a somewhat philosophical vein at the book's end and accepts the necessity of change, not necessarily as desirable but as a factor in achieving one's adult integrity. In *I Never Loved Your Mind*, a kind of tongue-in-cheek Baedeker for the adolescent lured by the Hippie life, Dewey Daniels refuses to follow Yvette Goethals to her Taos commune and its promise of eternal adolescence, but only because he sees some peripheral good in the adult world where one might sometime need an appendectomy.

In *Confessions of a Teenage Baboon* and *Pardon Me*,

You're Stepping on My Eyeball Chris Boyd and Marsh Mellow respectively hold tenaciously to their childhood by pursuing the spectral figure of a dead father as an anchor to a non-existent, dream-created childhood. Chris carries with him in his peregrinations with his nurse-mother the one solid, romantic relic left by his father, a Chesterfield coat. Marsh, in his wish-fulfillment fantasies, creates a romantic life-script worthy of Harlequin Romances in which he and his father are loved by all the exotic beauties of the world.

In *A Star for the Latecomer* Brooke Hillary passively views an adult life planned for her by a mother determined to make a star. Brooke herself prefers a love and marriage scenario, but for the most part is willing to accept her mother's equally romantic notion of a life of first nights and public admiration. The John and Lorraine of *The Pigman's Legacy*, although still students of Franklin High, are less inclined to view maturation with the horror shown in *The Pigman*, but they still cling to the child's romantic notion that life can be a mysterious and exciting adventure when they seclude Colonel Glenville from the talons of the IRS and arrange his deathbed marriage to Dolly Racinski.

Another premier theme in the Zindel canon is the adolescents' burden of accumulated guilt and its destructive aftermath. John and Lorraine appropriate the guilt for Mr. Pignati's death at the end of *The Pigman* and recognize that their part in his death has exacted a death of a part of their being, their innocence; it is, they feel, a terrible price to pay. In *The Pigman's Legacy* John and Lorraine assume responsibility for the Pigman's reincarnation, Colonel Glenville, because of a desire to atone for Mr. Pignati's death. But once again the two are partners in an act potentially as destructive as the wild party they threw at Mr. Pignati's home when John gambles away the modest nest egg Colonel Glenville entrusted to him. Once again the two adolescents have acquired a burden of guilt for their immature behavior.

In none of the other Zindel novels does the burden of guilt assume the proportions and generate the psychotic effects it has on Marsh Mellow. When his drunken father is run over by a bus, Marsh feels himself responsible, a crime of omission for not stopping his father's reckless drinking. This feeling of his culpability in his father's death has preyed on Marsh until he finally constructs a delusion in which his father is not dead but a prisoner of nebulous officials who are trying to silence his effort to reveal their collective perfidy. All of this Marsh fleshes out in his daily intercourse with Edna Shinglebox, in forged letters and in ambitious plans for his father's rescue, even though the urn containing his father's ashes rests all the while under Marsh's bed. The potential for a similar overwhelming accumulation of guilt is present in *A Star for the Latecomer* where Brooke watches her mother die of cancer without Brooke having made that one triumphant step toward stardom that her mother so longed for. However, the anguish Brooke feels for having failed her mother vanishes in the girl's realization that her mother's dreams for her were the somewhat selfish dreams of a frustrated woman and were not her own dreams.

As identical themes reappear in Zindel's novels so too do characters who might very well be the consequence of incestuous inbreeding in the writer's ink. Aside from the tormented adolescents burdened by feelings of guilt, inadequacy, and rejection, the most familiar figure in his works is the anguished parent, generally the mother, who is incapable of showing love or affection for the child because some real or imagined inadequacy or rejection has warped her life. The mothers of Lorraine and Chris have been deserted by their husbands and vent their life-hatred on their defenseless children. Marsh's mother in those rare moments of sobriety demeans and humiliates Marsh with charges that he is either a sex fiend or a drug addict or both, implying that this acorn did not fall far from the tree. That Zindel has not abandoned the lament of the deleterious effect of the possessive, frustrated mother is noticed in *A Star for the Latecomer*. Here Brooke's mother, whose life as a wife and mother was ultimately unsatisfactory, drives her daughter, with a callous obsession, to be a star, to be famous.

I mentioned earlier that irony is a prevalent feature in all of Zindel's novels, but nowhere is it more apparent than in a kind of archetypal scene of physical or psychical destruction that climaxes each novel. The incident, begun in adolescent innocence, ends as a kind of Gotterdammerung of adolescence where the fragile fabric clothing the adolescents' lives is shredded. It is as though Zindel feels the need to dramatize his compassion for the adolescents by some symbolic representation of the death of adolescence and innocence, with flamboyant and theatrical proportions.

In *The Pigman* this scene is the roisterous party thrown by John and Lorraine. The destruction of Mr. Pignati's treasured collection of pigs and his wife's wedding dress also demolishes the sanctuary John and Lorraine had built against life. In *My Dar-*

ling, My Hamburger Liz undergoes her abortion on the night of the senior prom, a grim contrast, and among the other casualties are Maggie's romantic naivete and the adolescent quietude of Liz, Sean, Dennis, and Maggie. Zindel chooses a hippie commune, "Love Land," in *I Never Loved Your Mind* for a violent free-for-all among the "flower people" to inform Dewey of the fakery of the life Yvette has chosen and his ineptitude for such a farcical existence.

In *Pardon Me, You're Stepping on My Eyeball* Zindel produced a classic model for an adolescent Armageddon. A teenage party degerates into an orgy of sex, drinking, drugs, and vandalism where the guests are rewarded for their folly by the awesome destruction of the hostess' beautiful home by fire. In this fire Marsh's pet raccoon, which has served him as a kind of lifeline to his humanity, burns to death. Another party, again unreal in its cast and consequences, serves as the catalyst to shatter Chris's fragile equilibrium in the world in *Confessions of a Teenage Baboon*. Lloyd Dipardi's drunken brawl with his adolescent faithful occurs as his mother dies in an adjoining room and terminates when Lloyd commits suicide, forcing Chris to a realization that there is and always will be a dark side to life.

The climactic scenes in Zindel's last two novels follow the Zindel guidelines but have more of the optimistic overtones underlying the conclusions to *The Pigman, My Darling, My Hamburger,* and *I Never Loved Your Mind*. In *A Star for the Latecomer* Brooke has her mother's coffin opened at the funeral home so she can place her dancing shoes in the coffin and whisper to her mother, "I may not be what you want me to be, but I do hope, whatever I choose, that you'll be proud of me." Only after the painful, agonizing death of her mother is Brooke free. Zindel's flair for the dramatic setting in which his adolescents apprehend the death of their innocence is apparent in *The Pigman's Legacy*. Here in a gaudy Atlantic City casino, amid all the pathetic dreams of miraculous wealth, John compulsively gambles away Colonel Glenville's money, to realize once again that he had trespassed into the adult world of lies, deceit, and delusion.

What is it then that caused *Confessions of a Teenage Baboon* and *Pardon Me, You're Stepping on My Eyeball!* to stand out so starkly and ominously from the rest of Zindel's novels. It was not an alteration in the thematic insistence that adolescence is hell, no matter how it is viewed nostalgically over a distance of years. Nor was it the appearance of a new cast, for Chris, Marsh, and Edna, although more somber, less resilient, and quicker to despair, are the same troubled adolescents as John and Lorraine and Dewey and Brooke. It was not a different structural design since the two novels build to the same moment of truth, a disastrous and dramatic incident, which signals the end of childhood innocence and the acceptance, hereafter, of the responsibility for one's behavior. Nor were compassion and sympathy for the ineffectual and harassed adolescents absent in these novels; Zindel seems to love his various literary offspring equally.

The answer, I believe, can come only from the author himself. In the biographical data tha has surfaced about Zindel since the success of *The Pigman* and his Pulitzer Prize play, *The Effects of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the Moon Marigolds*, there is evidence of a troubled and unhappy childhood, of agony and anger over the separation of his parents. One can only speculate that the Zindel who wrote *Confessions* and *Pardon Me* was deliberately purging some personal demons, demons that forbade even a modest relief to the miseries of Marsh or Edna or Chris. He allowed them no momentary interlude of adolescent happiness or rapture such as John and Lorraine enjoyed in Mr. Pignati's home, or as Brooke enjoyed with Brandon on their picnic, or as Dewey experienced as the lovely Yvette vacuumed the living room in the nude. Instead March, Edna, and Chris suffer a continuous anxiety, endure misfortune and humiliation without hope of relief, even with a sometimes psychotic acceptance of the inevitability of despair. In only one other adolescent novelist have I noticed this propensity for making the adolescent the *total* victim, Robert Cormier in *The Chocolate War* and *I Am the Cheese*.

Marsh, Edna, and Chris are victimized relentlessly throughout by an unrelieved anxiety; Marsh is unable to free himself of the guilt of his father's death; Edna is constantly reminded at home and at school that she is the "Super-Loser;" Chris suffers the endless indignity of squatting in the homes of strangers who are sick or dying. The chances for relief from these pressures are defeated constantly by the characters themselves or those around them, or merely by an unlucky throw of fate's dice. Marsh, who has lied to himself to keep his father alive, perpetuates the lies to maintain the one contact with reality he has found, his tenuous friendship with Edna. Edna, who has come to accept her mother's appraisal of her as "a sad sack," "in the forest of romance a desert," is unwilling to jeopardize the relative safety of anonymity and views high school as "just one more place (she) won't have to face the world." Chris' reclusive and hapless life of passively following his mother from case to case is mocked by the scorn and derision of the cruel, but well-intentioned Lloyd Dipardi and the innocent promiscuity of Rosemary. These anxieties mercilessly hound the three to the novels' conclusions.

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THE AUTHOR AS VILLAIN: The Treatment of Outsiders in Four Roy Brown Mysteries

Linda Shadiow, Montana State University

In her book, *Teaching Adolescent Literature: A Humanistic Approach,* Sheila Schwartz indicts popular television's current use of mentally ill characters as villains of cop shows saying that such depictions evoke attitudes like "if they are crazy, it's probably their own fault; if they suffer and die, they probably deserve it." She charges that such portrayals "create fear rather than empathy, increase alienation and anomie by emphasizing the idea of the different, and permit society to escape any involvement in the fate of its less fortunate citizens . . . the result is denial of humanity rather than affirmation of life" (p. 34). Roy Brown, British writer of young adult novels, has written four books that critics have characterized as "crackling good mystery stories." In addition to suspenseful plots and compelling characters, however, the books have cops chasing villains. The villains are teenagers who have escaped from a juvenile detention home (*Flight of the Sparrows,* 1973), imprisoned teenage sociopaths (*The Cage,*, 1977), a fourteen-year-old mentally retarded girl (*Find Debbie!* 1976), and a walkaway from a mental hospital (*The Swing of the Gate,* 1978). In his treatment of these outsiders, Brown himself becomes the villain.

In *Flight of the Sparrows* four young escapees (two from a detention school, one from a foster home, one from a violent past) try to survive in the streets of London by pilfering food and supplies and by evading the police. This early book differs from the others in its compassion and optimism. Sprog is running away from a foster home when he meets and joins up with Charlie, a mute with a "strange and ugly face." Because Charlie cannot speak, the reader learns about him through Sprog's observations. Similar to the action in Holland's *Man Without a Face,* once the two become friends, Sprog forgets about Charlie's scarred features.

The two are joined by Keith (a wrongly accused juvenile) and Scobie (a young criminal) who have both escaped from a detention school. Sprog protects Charlie from Scobie's insults and assists and defends him when necessary. Eventually Keith is tracked down by a concerned teacher, Scobie is picked up by the police, and Sprog and Charlie escape the raid on the condemned building they all lived in. As Brown states it, "side by side, along the brightening towpath, they went on, hitching up their bags" (p. 121). The reader senses that the two of them learn from each other, respect each other, and need each other.

All four children are outsiders. Charlie's face, "as brown and shrivelled as a rotten apple," and his inability to speak separate him from the others. But because he is compassionate, because he offers to share his basement hideaway with Sprog, he is not as isolated as are similar characters in Brown's later novels. Scobie has a reputation for violence and that makes him an outsider. As the teacher, Mr. Tyson, looks for Keith, he tells the police that "wrongly convicted" Keith was "egged on by a hardened tearaway." He wants Keith safe, but "so far as I am concerned you can feed Scobie to the lions in Regent's Park" (p. 98). The reader gets the idea that Scobie isn't worth empathy, pity, even concern. He belongs outside. What would happen with a systematic attempt to reform juveniles like Scobie?

In *The Cage,* Brown foists such an experiment on a band of Scobies. Some well-meaning monks capture a variety of young delinquents and use them as laboratory specimens in a bizzare experiment. These captors sneak a drug into the evening milk in order to wipe out the boys' memories of their past crimes and violence. The monks then embark on a behavior modification plan in order to reshape these outsiders. This pygmalian plot is not successful. The boys discover why the milk tastes funny and start to recall bits and pieces of their pasts. They find an informer among them and escape only to return fatalistically to the power of those pasts. Two reviewers in the "Books for You" column of *English Journal* paraphrase the theme: "It is inevitable for individuals to reach their own worst nature" (Ward, p. 93). The readers learn that these outsiders will stay outsiders.

Rather than delinquents, the outsiders in Brown's next two books are mentally ill. *Find Debbie!* becomes a cop's assignment when her family reports her disappearance. In *Swing of the Gate* a young newspaper reporter tries to find his brother, a murder suspect, before the police. There are other similarities between *Find Debbie!* and *The Swing of the Gate.* The outsiders (Debbie and Lennie) appear only briefly and are characterized in detail by their influences on the lives of the people in their families. The plots are set so both characters are absent from

the immediate action. Debbie has run away from home; Lennie has escaped from the mental institution.

Both characters are mentally ill, violent, and unpredictable. Both have disrupted the lives of members of their families, have haunted and threatened others, have been the cause of guilt, shame, and unhappiness. Lennie's family refers to him as "moron," "little reptile," "brat," "a sort of cuckoo in the nest." Debbie is called "she-devil," "submissive," "a nanny goat," "irrational," "fiend," "a wild bird." In both stories the family members face their own feelings about the outsider they are related to. Debbie's sister comments, "eventually we faced up to the fact that we loathed the sight of Debbie . . . you might as well try and love a stone" (p. 68). Lennie's brother Gordon "doesn't want him turning up at the bank one morning and getting in the way of his promotion" (p. 74).

As the policeman interviews Debbie's family in order to piece together the details of her life, he discovers the extent of her effect on those around her: "Perhaps the worst thing was . . . hating. Wishing she was dead" (p. 69); "They used to ditch kids like Debbie on frosty hillsides—and that would have been okay with me" (p. 80); "Personally, I reckon it'll be for the best if you never find her" (p. 79). Similarly, Lennie's brother Alan relives parts of their past as he talks with his family in order to track down Lennie before the police do: "We should have . . . dumped Lennie over the side, with a spare anchor tied around his neck" (p. 92); Lennie's mother is " a witch who's given birth to a killer" (p. 74); "You can bleed to death, caring for Lennie" (p. 57).

What we have learned about these outsiders is how much they have caused fear, guilt, and shame in their families. How they can drive normal people to abnormal reactions. Both families control these outsiders with violence—as if to reciprocate. "There was only one way to shut Debbie up and that was to hit her" (p. 79). "She'd drag him (Lennie) upstairs by the scruff of his neck. Then, when she'd got him to the top, she'd throw him down again. Could be quite quite effective . . ." (p. 95).

In *The Swing of the Gate* Alan is praised for his almost abnormal concern for his brother by a policeman investigating the murder Lennie is charged with: "Apart from you—I think I'm right—none of them cares if Lennie is found dead or alive" (p. 63). Alan's girlfriend says it differently: "*You* care . . . it's Lennie you're really chained to" (p. 74). But a few pages later Alan (whose withered hand is the result of one of Lennie's spontaneous acts of childhood violence) explains, "He's my charity of the month" (p. 76). The mystery is unravelled, Lennie is found. But in a final scene similar to *The Cage*, Lennie rises to his own "worst nature" and shoots Alan when the two confront each other. This physical violence frees Alan of the emotional ties with his brother; as Lennie is taken away by the police, Alan sighs, "So they had got Lennie: the gate had closed" (p. 108).

The mystery *Find Debbie!* is a psychological maze that leads the police to uncover the family's plan to get Debbie out of the house so her mother can relax and temporarily recover from the girl's demands. They have brought her to the home of her father's social work patients (Angus McKinley is a psychotic suspected of past murders). When Angus leads the inspector to a mound in the backyard, "unmistakably a grave with withering flowers scattered across it" he says, "You seek Debbie, my friend? There—I have brought her peace" (p. 160). The book has led the reader to the position of agreeing that Mr. McKinley has brought peace to everyone. Earlier her brother Terry had reflected on Debbie's probable conribution to life: "All she is going to pay off to society is a mouthful of spit" (p. 83).

These books may be award winning mysteries. Brown may believe that "my aim with each novel is to make people, and especially children, as real as possible" (deMontreville, p. 61); but in using the outsiders in these four books as villains, he is adding to the fear, uneasiness, and misunderstanding many young adult readers already feel toward people like Debbie and Lennie. They see delinquents being discarded, the mentally retarded in seemingly deserved hiding, and are led to sympathizing with families who push these outsiders farther away. An adult reader may see these novels as using a powerful technique for promoting heightened awareness and renewed compassion for the plight of outsiders. The younger, impressionable reader is more likely to take the characterizations literally as evidence supporting their existing stereotypes. I agree with Sheila Schwartz: "The result is a denial of humanity rather than an affirmation of life . . . I would prefer the well-written books that bring people closer together rather than those that highlight the exotic, brutal, and freakish" (p. 61).

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BEYOND BOOKS—Media for the Classroom

Dan Ward, Georgia State Department of Education

TOM Liner, who worked at Gainesville High School (Georgia) and wrote for this column, is gone; Georgia's loss is Kentucky's gain. But Tom still writes for this column from his new home, the University of Eastern Kentucky. Tom's final, Georgia-based contribution follows:

I had doubts about the reception Caedmon's *Langston Hughes: Poetry and Reflection by the Author* would receive in my two large senior classes. They were college-bound kids, i.e., sophisticated, hard-headed, and vocal—especially about what they didn't like. Poetry was among the latter. The idea of merely *listening* to a poet read and talk about poetry was less than exciting to these full-fledged members of the video generation. My previous poetic listening venture had not fared well with them a couple of weeks before. The works and readings were excellent; the students were bored and said so. But I wanted to try it again, and Caedmon's arrangement of Hughes' BBC broadcasts is good. There are generous selections of his poetry and informative, personal comments about his life and career. All are insightful and infused with Hughes' wisdom and gentle irony.

Preparation took a little time. A student who needed extra credit volunteered to arrange for copies of some of the poems. (The poems are from Hughes' *Selected Poems*, Knopf, 1954.) I scrounged the tape player, listening stations, and head phones from the Reading Lab.

Few of the seniors knew Hughes, which startled me. "Ain't he that rich guy?" They groaned when I passed out the poems and told them to read and listen to at least three of the poems and respond to them in their journals. "Aw, No Man!" "Poetry *again!*" Not an auspicious beginning.

They surprised and pleased me when they listened to the tape. I expected minimum effort, sketchy comments and the usual complaints about poetry in the journals. Few students did only the required minimum. Most listened to *both sides* of the tape simply because they liked it; they said so. Some listened *twice!* One lanky basketball player paid Hughes the supreme compliment; I asked him how he liked the poetry and he said smiling, "Poetry? I thought that dude was just telling stories."

Talking is what Langston Hughes does best on this tape. Most of my seniors liked "Ku Klux," a poem that stings with irony. Some of the better students liked "A Negro Speaker of Rivers," a langorous and beautifully evocative poem. But almost all of them liked his *talk*, and talk is what made this recording special to them. One senior summed up the most important idea of the poems and conversation on the recording—and in Hughes' career—better than I can. "The major theme of his works, and justly so, deals with Hughes' experiences, being black in a world that cannot accept him as he is."

Because the recording includes so much valuable historical and social commentary, it should prove useful to more than the poetry reader, English teacher, or English classroom. It has potential for interdisciplinary studies, e.g. English/Social Studies, Black studies classes and history classes that deal with the 20th century. Caedmon offers two other Hughes' collections read by Hughes' friend Ossie Davis: *The Poetry of Langston Hughes* and *Simple Stories*; they're worth a listen, too. (*Langston Hughes: Poetry and Reflections by the Author* fr. Caedmon 1995 Broadway, NYC, NY 10023/212-580-3400; 59 min. $8.98 disc or cassette.) TL

The value of an author's comments is inestimable. It adds a dimension to literature to which students respond positively as Tom clearly indicated above. Tom should know; he's been conscripting writers to talk with his students for years. For those of us who are less persistent or less fortunate than Tom, the International Reading Association through M. Jerry Weiss has already done the "leg-work" and provided a resource worth mentioning and remembering, *From Writers to Students: The Pleasures and Pains of Writing*. Nine cassettes are available of interviews with nineteen authors of adolescent literature from Sue Alexander to Paul Zindel. Running times vary as does the audio quality, but the interviews are all rather interesting and useful as supplements to students' in-class or out-of-class readings. A transcript of all nineteen interviews edited by Weiss is also available; it's a good print companion for the tapes and a useful resource in itself. (*From Writers to Students: The Pleasures and Pains of Writing* fr. International Reading Association, 800 Barksdale Road, POB 8139, Newark,Delaware 19711/302-731-1600; monograph $4.50, cassettes $9.00 ea., the set of nine cassettes $65)

Some time ago Bob Dylan commented that "the times they are a-changin'." To that I would add " the folks they are a-movin'." David Muschell, who also contributes to this column, moved his desk from Greene County to Clarke County where he now teaches at Cedar Shoals High School (Athens,GA). Fortunately, Dave took along his typewriter, his interest in writing and his willingness to review material, a sample of which follows.

As an English major in college, I hid my Asimov or Pohl or Lieber behind my Milton and Chaucer tomes to avoid the ridicule of the pedants, but in the years following those guiltier days, science fiction gained considerable prestige. Today science fiction is respectable, and many of my students are sci-fi nuts. One of the books that helped legitimize science fiction is Asimov's *Foundation* trilogy.

With typical intelligence and audience awareness, Asimov chose one of the most important passages in the lengthy triad to record, that is, "The Mule" (Part II of the second book, *Foundation and Empire*). Since a major theme is the use of science and psychology for mapping the future (via the genius of Hari Seldon), it is appropriate that the mysterious, unpredictable Mule, the mutant who cannot be foreseen by Seldon's Plan, is the central character of the recording.

This section is action-packed: electronic-whip equipped police are faced down; hyper-space travel is used; murder for the sake of civilization is committed. This "action" format is filled with dialogue (a bit like "Brooklyn in Space") and is important to every teacher who has had to waken a sleeping student lulled to somnolence by Sir Bartholomew Milsap's reading of Thomas Hardy. There is excitement, suspense, and a lot of meat for discussion in Asimov's carefully edited recording.

The material has wider application than a science fiction unit. One topic in the story deals with handicap awareness. The mentally and physically deformed magnifico/Mule, though ruthless behind the scenes, is a symphathetic character. "The Mule" can complement Keyes' *Flowers for Algernon*, Greene's *I Never Promised You a Rose Garden*, Vonnegut's "Harrison Bergeron," or even Poe's "Hop Frog."

More background materials on the *Foundation* would have been helpful and may need to be teacher developed, e.g., origin, purpose and milieu. Another small problem I had was Asimov's editing: my dog-eared copy of the trilogy and I were no match for the jumps. I attempted to follow the recording with the book and ended up scrambling through the pages pursuing the shifts. Page or chapter numbers would have been a nice inclusion. Problems aside, Asimov has added a fine selection to the other Caedmon Foundation recordings: *Foundation: The Psychohistorians* and *Foundation: The Mayors*. (Isaac Asimov's *The Mule from Foundation and Empire* fr. Caedmon, 1995 Broadway, NYC, NY 10023/212-580-3400; 57 min.; $8.98 disc or cassette.) DM

Adding visuals to audio (or was it audio to visuals?) created the filmstrip/record/tape kit, and it brought the A-V industry into existence. One of the younger members of that fraternity is Media Basics, Inc. MB specializes in feature film adaptations to filmstrip/tape units. Their packages are vinyl clad, snap closure boxes which stack or stand upright and are well-suited to integrated collections. Within each kit are carefully selected stills and well-edited sound tracks from a feature length film, the usual study guide unusually well-prepared (good intros, a synopsis for each strip, discussion questions, follow-up suggestions and correlated readings) and a paperback *copy* of the original work or one that will complement the kit. One of MB's more recent and stronger offerings is *Martin Luther King*. Most of the original story and action is preserved in the four filmstrips and tapes to which it was cut. Those twelve years of Dr. King's public life are the focus of the film, and he is shown in an heroic, elevated manner. Nothing within the piece tarnishes King's image or diminishes his accomplishments. Clearly, it is not King without tears, but there is more than enough reality around for those who want it. What the film does offer is a view of a man whose accomplishments rattled the conscience of a nation. The major events of the "civil rights movement" in relation to Dr. King are developed rapidly, as is Dr. King's philosophy of non-violence and his determination to bring a race of people into full-participation within their own country. The original film was entertaining, informative, and well-done and so is MB's adaptation.

Opportunities for use include interdisciplinary classes, minority studies, ethnic literature units and so on. Classes reading works like *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *Cry, The Beloved Country* or authors like James Baldwin, Richard Wright or. . . Langston Hughes would find it useful. An excellent, recent publication has a more comprehensive list of possibilities and teaching suggestions, i.e., Barbara Dodd Stanford and Karima Amin's *Black Literature for High School Students* from NCTE; Stanford and Amin make a number of suggestions useful for King and for the Langston Hughes material. (*Martin Luther King* fr. Media Basis, Inc., Larchmont Plaza, Larchmont, NY 10538/914-834-2505; four filmstrips/cassettes; 77 min.; $129.)

On the lighter, less serious side MB also offers *Watership Down*, a filmstrip/tape version of the full-length animated film of Richard Adams' novel. The story line, heavily adapted in the screen original, still hits the high points and provides a good overview of Adams' story to supplement individual or class reading. From the Watership rabbits, Adams went to *Shardik*. Better readers among your students could do the same. (Richard Adams' *Watership Down* fr. Media Basics, Inc., Larchmont Plaza, Larchmont,

NY 10538/914-834-2505; three filmstrips/cassettes; 64 min.; $109.95.)

And now for more author talk, this time it has video and this time it's free. Can you believe it? Free! By-Line: *The Author Talk Show* with Gene-Gabriel Moore is a production of Georgia Public Television. It is in its eighth year and it's available across the country through various ETV stations as well as independent cable companies. But this isn't just a plug for my sponsor or their product, Mr. Moore's program is unusual. It has attracted quite an impressive list of writers many of whom are the most illusive and camera shy of individuals. Mr. Moore, a writer himself, uses a novel interviewing/production approach; rather than discuss the guest's lurid, late-night behaviors, he discusses the guest's writing, which Mr. Moore reads in advance of the taping. The combination is irrestible, one intelligent, informed writer speaking with another about something they both are prepared to discuss. The guestbook demonstrates *how* irresitable it all is; found there are names like Eudora Welty, James Dickey, Dee Brown, William Styron, Tom Wolfe, Paul Zindel, John Barth, Garson Kanin and on and on . . . The program is an uninterrupted thirty minutes with off-the-air taping/reproduction rights granted educational institutions. Upcoming broadcasts will feature, among others, Judith Viorst and Maya Angelou. Check local ETV stations or program listings for more information. ■

Davis, continued from p. 4

The unrelieved tensions weighing on each character are compounded by the squalid, sterile, or hostile environments in which the three characters forever move. Marsh's home is a pigsty; his high school life includes daily attendance in a group-therapy-experience class peopled by the school's misfits, including Edna; his mother drinks herself senseless each night; he frequents the "kooky" bars his father has raised him in. Edna's home life is palled by her parents' loveless marriage; her natural sexual anxieties are magnified by her mother's intention to make her into a likely candidate for a conventional middle class marriage with no concern as to how the transformation is achieved—she suggests Edna engage in a little "hanky-panky" on her dates and do a little research to learn where the erogenous zones are located; her despair in dealing with Marsh takes her to the foul-smelling, roach-infested shack of a charlatan palmist named Miss Aimee. Chris passes his adolescent years living in an attic or cubicle in the homes where his mother is nursing; his school life is equally lonely and he is derided by his classmates as a mother's boy; he is in constant contact with the sick and dying; his meager childhood possessions, which fit into one small, cheap cardboard suitcase, contain only one treasure, his dead father's Chesterfield coat. The succession of scenes depicting Marsh's, Edna's, and Chris' trails remind me of nothing so much as Hogarth's pen and ink sketches of the miseries of London life.

Even the redoubtable Zindel humor has taken on a black cast in these two novels. Although there is always an undercurrent of pathos in Zindel's humor, the humorous episodes in *Confessions* and *Pardon Me* do nothing so much as reinforce the misery of the moment. Witness the scene in the office of the guidance counselor where Edna's mother is tripping over herself in her haste to catalogue Edna's failures as Edna listens in total despair; or friendless Marsh's frantic recital of all the friends he has made among the freaks of the circus and of the women who just can not resist him—an exotic dancer in a topless bar, a curvaceous daughter of a congressman, hookers; or Chris's mother's wholesale thievery from the Dipardi's while she refuses to allow Chris to use Lloyd Dipardi's toilet and instead presents him with an empty milk carton.

But with *The Pigman's Legacy* and *A Star for the Latecomer* the Zindel of the earliest novels is back, back where he is needed. The latter-day Lorraine and John leave the dead Colonel's room where Dolly now performs the mourning rites to walk past the hospital's nursery where the promise of life is most obvious, a promise which prompts a declaration of love for Lorraine by John. Brooke survives her mother's agonizing death with a regret that she was unable to fulfill her mother's dreams but with no sense of personal guilt. The reassurance Zindel offered his earlier adolescents is back, and though adolescent readers of Zindel will never be led to the false notion that the quality of adolescence is unbounded joy, with the rerouted Zindel they will not see in it only the blackness suggested by *Confessions of a Teenage Baboon* and *Pardon Me, You're Stepping on My Eyeball.*

And this, I believe, is good. Adolescence is not a time to demolish thoroughly those faint lingering childhood myths of the world's perfection; it is a time to call the adolescents' attention to some of the fraying edges of the myth, to some of the imperfections of the warp and woof of the fabric, but not a time to destroy the myth's whole cloth. If adolescents are permitted to let the myths dissolve slowly, I feel there is far more likelihood they will attempt to reweave the myth as best they can throughout their lives. Welcome back, Zindel. ■

THE IMAGE OF THE TEACHER IN ADOLESCENT FICTION

Mary Ann Rygiel, High School Teacher, currently at Auburn University

As a teacher, I am interested in the image of teachers. As an English teacher, I share the English teacher's faith that the written word is powerful, remaining after the chimera of television and film have faded. One of the most prolific, widely-read—and hence, potentially influential—groups of commentators on teachers in the past decade has been the writers of adolescent fiction. Because the novels in this genre focus on the lives and problems of teenagers, they are frequently set in schools for at least some of the events of the story, and they depict teachers as constituents of the literal and psychological landscape of their teenaged protagonists. Through this fiction, these writers have articulated their views on the qualities of the good teacher and the bad teacher.

I have chosen fifteen adolescent novels for an examination of the characteristics of the teachers portrayed in them. In some novels, teachers are a relatively minor element of the adolescent's landscape. In others, teachers are far more prominent in the terrain of the teenager's world. Despite this difference in degree of importance of the teacher to the novel, the writers, though working independently, have reached an artistically expressed consensus on the traits of teachers who are portrayed positively and teachers who are portrayed negatively. The characteristics of each group are instructive.

Imagination

The first characteristic of teachers who receive favorable treatment is that they are imaginative and innovative. Imagination finds its uses in all subject matters. Ms. Barbara Finney, English teacher in Paula Danziger's *The Cat Ate My Gymsuit*, has a light show in class, Friday Finney flicks with snacks, a bearded guitar-playing visitor who shares his poetry with the class. Miss Blue, a science teacher (M. E. Kerr, *Is That You, Miss Blue?*), makes science more intelligible to her students by her idiosyncratic approach. One instance is her characterization of inert gases as "snob gases," for their property of not combining with other elements. Ms. Larson, art teacher in Paula Danziger's *The Pistachio Prescription*, makes the subject of American art history come alive for her class through the assignment of such projects as the making of a class quilt.

Insight and Involvement

A second characteristic of the good teacher is insight into the behavior and feelings of young people. Through her characterization of gases, Miss Blue has also managed to make an oblique comment on the social life of the girls at Charles Boarding School. Yet Miss Blue's religious zeal makes her remote from the student body and the other faculty, so her perceptive view of the girls is undetected by all but the sensitive narrator. For other teachers portrayed in other novels, insight is coupled with involvement. For example, Miss Peabody, English teacher in Isabelle Holland's *Heads You Win, Tails I Lose*, does not simply recognize overweight Melissa Hammond's misery at the sight of her handsome, insensitive neighbor and his giggling girlfriend at the town library. Miss Peabody tells Melissa with studied casualness that Ted MacDonald will be all right in about ten years.

A corollary to involvement with students is that the teacher is energetic. An apt image of this energy occurs in Frank Bonham's *The Nitty Gritty*, in the person of Mr. Toia, who drops by on his motorcycle to visit truant Charlie Matthews at his home. In this story, the boundaries of Mr. Toia's teaching domain are not the four walls of the classroom; he is capable of reaching out to "street people" in the "street" if necessary in order to convey his message about the power of education to lift people out of the trap of poverty.

Degree and kind of teacher involvement varies with the kind of world the novelist has created and those who inhabit it. Mr. Toia is not a significant part of most of the events of *The Nitty Gritty* because this novel is really a story about how wise "street wise" is. Therefore, most of the episodes in the novel show people hustling. Yet, Toia's visit to the Matthews family in the beginning of the story and his discussion with Charlie of his "story" at the end of the novel provide a structural frame and perspective on all that happens.

By contrast, in both *Winning*, by Robin Brancato, and *The Man Without a Face*, by Isabelle Holland, the focus is on the critically important relationship of an adolescent with a teacher. In each case, the teacher does not put a limit on the relationship either in terms of time spent or emotion invested. In *Winning*, the teacher, young Ann Treer, recently widowed, reluctantly agrees to tutor Gary Madden, a star football player who has been hospitalized after a paralyzing injury in a game. Treer's relationship with Gary keeps him mentally alive during his months in the hospital, by her faithful visits, her awareness of his need for independence, and not least by her

assignment of a psychological novel (*Crime and Punishment*) and probing written work. She also saves Gary quite literally in his moment of depression during a lonely New Year's Eve, when she persuades Gary not to take his own life.

Interestingly, Justin McLeod (*The Man Without a Face*) also consents quite reluctantly to tutor fourteen-year-old Chuck Norstadt, a boy who needs to escape his female household but cannot pass the entrance exam at St. Matthew's boarding school. McLeod has a past which has left him emotionally bankrupt and self-punishing. But unlike Treer's widowhood, which provides a respectable curtain of detachment, McLeod's past would not meet conventional tests of social probity. His reclusive life protects a past of secrets and a present emotionally barren by choice. Chuck's life, too, has been emotionally incomplete, spent with a mother whose hobby is husbands. Charles learns enough during his summer of studies to be admitted to the boarding school. But more importantly, through the developing relationship between Chuck and McLeod, both man and boy turn toward personal commitment and away from a life stance of ironic detachment.

Talent

McLeod also exhibits the third major characteristic of the good teacher: the possession of talent, or in some instances, scholarly ability. Although his mysterious life gives rise to the whispered absurdity that he writes pornography, he is in fact a writer. He reveals to Chuck that he has published under the pseudonym Terrence Blake, a writer of highly regarded fantasy and science fiction.

In *Heads You Win, Tails I Lose*, also by Isabelle Holland, the drama teacher and coach, Miss Ainslie, has been in English repertory, appeared on Broadway, and directed a high school play favorably reviewed by a New York newspaper. Brian Griffin, in Lois Duncan's *Killing Mr. Griffin*, has sacrificed his status as tenured faculty member in a university English department to teach where he sees greater need, in high school. Barbara Finney leaves Dwight D. Eisenhower Junior High School to pursue a doctoral degree in bibliotherapy.

Adherence to Standards

Writers of adolescent fiction delineate a fourth major characteristic of good teachers—adherence to standards. They distinguish between fair standards and gratuitous cruelty, and expect mature readers to do the same. The penultimate example occurs in *Killing Mr. Griffin*, in which a group of adolescents present a distorted view of their English teacher. Yet author Lois Duncan makes clear the altruistic nature of Griffin's career choice and his personal code: the basis for his strict standards in class is his consuming desire to see students become independent thinkers and writers. He does not tolerate late papers, plagiarized work, or vacuity of thought in student writing. Nor does he like the latter any better in colleagues.

Justin McLeod is also faithful to high standards. He announces to Chuck Norstadt his uncompromising terms for the summer tutoring: three hours of tutoring a day, followed by Chuck's three hours of independent study. Any violation, and the arrangement is finished. In Mildred Taylor's *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*, Mrs. Logan, a black teacher in a segregated school in the Mississippi Delta of the 1930's, maintains standards in a difficult setting. In fact, her failing the unscholarly T.J. for cheating leads to the loss of her job and financial crisis for her family.

Because individuals vary in what they see as having importance, two teachers may both have high standards even if their specific values clash. This is made clear in Alice Childress's *A Hero Ain't Nothin' But a Sandwich*. Bernard Cohen, a seventh-grade teacher in a Harlem school, emphasizes traditional academic learning. Nigeria Greene, also a seventh-grade teacher at the same school, teaches civics and social studies with a social message. He wants to imbue his students with a sense of personal pride and brotherhood.

Bad teachers can be defined by the contrapositive to assertions made about good teachers. Teachers who are not imaginative are not good teachers. Similarly, teachers who are not involved with students, not intelligent, not faithful to high standards, are not good teachers.

Miss Appel, in Robert McKay's *The Troublemaker*, provides a simultaneously comical and rather pathetic example of a teacher lacking in imagination. Her first writing assignment to a class of high school seniors is on the topic, "The Most Delicious Meal I Ever Ate." When rebel Jesse Wade responds with his enigmatic poem on boiled beans, Miss Appel runs scandalized to the principal.

As indicated earlier, degree of teacher involvement with students varies a great deal. Brian Griffin,

a good teacher, feels a strong commitment to his students. But expressions of commitment which come easily to a character such as Barbara Finney, who even plays volleyball with the girls in P.E. in order to reach a girl, are incompatible with Griffin's reserved nature. However, Griffin cares sufficiently about his students to risk his career for them; he cares enough about them to discuss them so frequently at home with his wife that she feels she knows them; he cares enough to be exacting.

In Barbara Wersba's *Tunes for a Small Harmonica*, Harold Murth offers an appropriate instance of a teacher who can be condemned for his lack of insight and involvement. Wrapped in a cocoon of his own feelings, Murth is unaware throughout the entire novel of the adolescent passion J. F. McAllister bears towards him. He seems oblivious to the significance of her nursing him through an illness and showering him with gifts, and takes astonishingly little notice of her presenting him with one thousand hard-earned dollars for a trip to England to complete his dissertation on Christopher Smart.

One fictional teacher has the unhappy distinction of combining lack of intelligence with a lack of high performance standards for herself or her class. Dolly Luna, in *Killing Mr. Griffin*, lets herself be "kidnapped" in her pajamas by her students, who then take her to breakfast. This makes her popular. To Brian Griffin, Dolly Luna is just that, a "dolly" with a head full of sawdust. The author later makes it clear that she concurs with Griffin's assessment of Dolly's intelligence. On the day Dolly substitutes for Griffin in class, she shows herself blithely unaware of what the students are studying, of where they are in their text, or of any need to present a coherent lesson.

Rosa Guy offers one of the most searing portraits of any teacher, in her Miss Lass in *The Friends*. Miss Lass not only remains aloof from her ghetto class, she actually fears and despises them, using her well-practiced technique of deflecting student hostility from herself by selecting a victim from the class as the focus of everyone's dislike or ridicule. The other portrait of a teacher without redeeming virtues occurs in the figure of Brother Leon, in Robert Cormier's *The Chocolate War*. For Brother Leon, the accomplishment of his own sales goal for a school fund drive is far more important than the resistance offered by any lone student to the sale. In fact, such resistance must be crushed. His brutal efforts to break Jerry Renault are unethical and terrifying.

Some teachers who are reading this and measuring themselves against the yardstick offered by writers of adolescent fiction may feel that what is upheld is an impossible ideal. But this is not so. Good teachers in these novels recognize their own flawed natures and do not parade before unsuspecting adolescents as paragons. Miss Ainslie tells Melissa, who views her as a substitute for her own alcoholic mother, that she was not successful with her own daughter. Admissions of weakness or of need are made by McLeod, by Treer. Like real, complex people in other professions, the good teacher is someone who can admit a mistake and who is capable of growth.

It was noted earlier that some teachers are relatively minor elements of some of these novels. The more the teacher is shown as a functionary who takes roll, makes and collects assignments, and gives punishments for misbehavior, the more likely it is that the portrait is negative or at best neutral. Such teachers are not central as individuals to the thoughts, feelings, and development of the adolescents in the novel.

Often, such a teacher is shown as part of a group. In *The Troublemaker*, Mrs. Parsons is shown in charge of a large study hall with several other teachers present. Mrs. Parsons would like to play the role of "loving tolerant mother person sitting down for a guidance session with wayward children" (p. 115). Yet, when an opportunity for honest discussion occurs, Mrs. Parsons shows that her real aim in any "dialogue" is to bring students around to an unquestioning acceptance of school policies. She tries to enlist the help of other study hall teachers in a suppression of dialogue. In Nat Hentoff's *This School Is Driving Me Crazy*, Mr. Kozodoy, who is seen as substantially concerned with his own career advancement, has class control but pinched sympathies for his students. Mr. Kozodoy is shown in several lengthy scenes drinking coffee in the faculty lounge and complaining about student Sam Davidson. In speaking directly to Sam, Mr. Kozodoy stands behind an unvarying shower of dictums: "He who is a slob in his personal habits is also a slob in his thinking habits. And he who is a slob in his thinking habits is a slob in his moral habits. It is all tied together. A clean boy is an honest boy. And vice versa" (p. 37).

By contrast, in novels presenting good teachers, the teachers are distinguished from their colleagues not only in their character traits but in the actual structure of the novel. They are shown talking individually with adolescents, they are shown working at their desks, they are shown looking at books, they are shown teaching with zest. It was said of Mrs. Logan that she was a "disrupting maverick" and that "more traditional thinkers like Miss Crocker were wary of her" (p. 22). This does not mean, however, that these teachers undermine the nature and purposes of education in their classrooms. In fact, they reinforce the true goals. While their colleagues cooperate blindly with an unwritten law that says it is all right to bore children in the classroom day after day, these teachers make efforts to

present stimulating, intelligent classes, to understand the problems of their students, and to uphold standards.

In making this composite portrait of the good teacher, I have drawn on the traits of many individual fictional characters. If we view literature not only as a reflection of reality but as an ideal towards which we should tend, this composite is obviously not a rigid mold. For each characteristic of good teachers, there is wonderful variation—"pied beauty"—in the way it is individually expressed. Good teachers are male and female, black and white, young and not-so-young. They are found in public schools and boarding schools, in junior high schools and high schools. They do not quit when the closing bell rings, but teach at home and in a hospital setting and in a school auditorium and on the street, if necessary. Good teachers make English class and art class exciting; they can make geometry and science and classics exciting, too. They may differ with each other as to what they see as important. But what can be said of all good teachers was said of Cohen and Greene by their principal (*A Hero Ain't Nothin' But a Sandwich*): " . . .the kids fare a bit better because they're both here" (p. 55).

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Robert Cormier: The Author and the Man

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This article is based on a speech honoring Robert Cormier at a reception commemorating the establishment of The Robert Cormier Collection at the Fitchburg State College Library, Fitchburg, Massachusetts, on May 3rd, 1981.

BEFORE I knew him, Robert Cormier was *nobody*.

That kind of line, I hope, is reminiscent of the sharp, somewhat ambiguous openings of two of Mr. Cormier's most recent novels:

> "I keep thinking that I have a tunnel in my chest. The path the bullet took, burrowing through the flesh. . . ." *(After the First Death)*

Before I knew him, Robert Cormier was nobody. It wasn't that he was *a* nobody; he just wasn't anybody *to me!* I hadn't heard of him. I lived in Connecticut and before that in Colorado and New York State, not in Fitchburg or Leominster. So I hadn't read his columns in the Fitchburg *Sentinel*, and I didn't regularly read *Redbook* or *McCall's* or (not being Catholic) *St. Anthony's Messenger* where his short stories were being published. Nor had I stumbled across *A Little Raw on Monday Mornings* or his other two earlier novels which, though they received critical praise, did not blaze across the list of best sellers I was reading at that time.

So it wasn't until early 1975 that I came in contact with this writer, when a friend suggested I read a book just out in paperback called *The Chocolate War*. This is a *must* read, he said. (And I loved chocolate. . .) So I read it, and I knew I had been introduced to something special.

It was a story that lingered after the covers, now slightly curled, had been closed on the final chapter. It had characters who left a bitter after-taste in my literary craw. (It coincidentally, Bob, confirmed everything I, as the only Protestant kid in an all Catholic neighborhood, had ever heard about sadistic and unChrist-like nuns and brothers that my playmates had occasionally been subjected to.) Most importantly, *The Chocolate War* had more substance than most other novels containing teenagers as main characters, yet it wasn't so literarily high-minded that high school readers couldn't figure out what was being said. And, unlike almost anything that had come before it, *The Chocolate War* ended on a negative note. Somebody had challenged the *status quo*. Not just Jerry Renault, but Robert Cormier. *Robert Cormier had disturbed the universe of young adult books!*

Later that year, Ken Donelson, then editor of the *Arizona English Bulletin* and now co-editor of *English Journal*, sent a questionnaire to me and several dozen other educators and librarians interested in adolescent fiction, asking us to list the 10 best books for teenagers that we would also recommend for adults to read. *The Chocolate War* was listed in the top ten by more people across the country than any other book, and it had, by that time, been on the market for only a year in hardcover and but a few months in paperback. Impressive.

Not long after, *I Am the Cheese* was pubished. You know the stories of what happens to many writers who sell a really not number: the next one or more books they write just aren't nearly as good. Not so with Robert Cormier. *I Am the Cheese* left me in shock for hours.

Here was this nice kid on a bike, and everybody seems out to get him. Here was a patriotic father who risked his life and the lives of his wife and son in order to reveal corruption so that goodness and justice might prevail. But—as has since been revealed in the newspapers and on "Sixty Minutes" about real life—the lives of the Delmonte family under new identities are *not* protected as promised, and the good guys and the bad guys are one and the same. Intrigue. Treachery. Betrayal. And death. Difficult stuff for teenage readers; thought-provoking stuff for teenage readers . . . adults too. I loved it. I shivered after I read and reread the final pages.

And the more recent *After the First Death* is one of the most unforgetable books I have ever read. Because there are so many new books to read all the time and because my profession requires that I read so many things, I almost never read a book more than once, unless I have to teach it or write study materials for it (and then sometimes I only skim). But *After the First Death* is a book I *want* to reread. I want to see again the building of the interrelationships among the personages in this chess game. I want to study the unraveling of the treachery, to savor the shocks of sudden realization, to reflect on the solitary, tension-filled last hours of Miro, and Ben, and Kate. (I fell in love with her, too, Bob. But since she's your creation, I guess I'll have to let you keep her.) It is an incredibly taxing and enervating book.

Others feel the same way I do—many others.

When I was reviewing manuscripts for last fall's *Connecticut English Journal* issue on adolescent literature, more people wanted to write pieces about Robert Cormier's books and more writers mentioned his three novels for adolescents than did so about any other writer (including the legendary Judy Blume). Impressive.

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Like most writers, Bob Cormier lives in two worlds. One world is the world we all see and live in; the other is the world of his own mind where characters come and go, and which we are priviledged to see and know as he tells us about them in his novels and stories. Many of you are familiar with the generally likable characters whom he has written about as a newspaper man and in his articles and short stories, as well as in his earlier novels: *Take Me Where the Good Times Are, A Little Raw on Monday Mornings,* and *Now and at the Hour*. They are, for the most part, people we see daily on the streets; they're "nice" people, people we need not be afraid of. And he, of course, has written a great deal about his own family, about himself and about his feelings, under the guise of John Fitch IV.

But there is also that other world in his mind where (Bob Cormier tells us) characters mysteriously appear. They seem to take shape, grow, "hang around" in his mind, and interact with other characters. Some writers decide what they want to write about, then outline a plot, and create characters to act out the conflicts. In contrast, Bob, like some other young adult writers I've spoken with recently, allows the characters to materialize and to take whatever actions they want or seem to *need* to take. Characters "collide," he says, and the author just records what happens.

The only problem is that, since the early '70s, so many of the characters who just happen to pop into Bob's mind are not very "nice" people. First there's Brother Leon, one of the most despicable clerics in all literature, and Archie Costello, the scheming leader of the Vigils in *The Chocolate War*. There's Brint, the brilliant inquisitor for the bad guys in *I Am the Cheese*. And in *After the First Death* there's Artkin and Miro and the other ruthless terrorists, along with General Marcus Marchand from the highly secret Inner Delta military organization who is so patriotic he betrays his own son! Bob, you're just going to have to start hanging around with a better class of people!

*****

Not everyone loves your books as much as I do, Bob—in case no one has told you yet. I asked one of my college classes last week what they might say to you if they could sit alone and talk with you. One high school social studies teacher said:

> The endings of *The Chocolate War* and *I Am the Cheese* have depressed me to such an extent that I will not read another book by you . . . unless I read the ending first so that I will know if it's safe emotionally.

An eighth-grade English teacher said:

> During the reading of *I Am the Cheese* and *After the First Death*, I was *very* confused. . . . I enjoyed them thoroughly.

A sophomore said:

> I didn't like the way *The Chocolate War* made me feel about people. . . .

And another English teacher said:

> I thought it was unnecessary that you had the female protagonist in *After the First Death* be so graphically a victim of bladder trouble.

Some reviewers and librarians and teachers would rather not deal with these three novels, as I'm sure you know. They want happy books, books where it's easy to tell the good guys from the bad, where good always wins. In fact, when *The Chocolate War* was first published, the reviewer in *Booklist* severely attacked it for its violence and "downbeat" ending. And some people continue to try to suppress these three books for one reason or another, including a recent accounting in Michigan of how many times God's name is taken in vain in *The Chocolate War*. But, considering the way the world is at the moment, Bob, I think the attempts to censor your novels are a great compliment. They prove that the books make readers *think, reflect, feel, react*—activities which make us *alive!* (Besides, if any attempt hasn't been made to censor a book for young adults these days, it probably isn't worth reading.)

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Of course, there was lots of praise in my class, too, as there has been continuously from high school students who write to you. One English teacher said: "All of your books made me want to talk about them as soon as I finished." Another said: "The reality in your books is awesome." A library assistant said: "After reading so many books this semester, few stay in my mind as vividly as this one. The power of the book, the characters, the political implications . . . have an incredible impact, one I will carry with me long after this course is over." And one graduate student simply said: "Wow!"

Professional reviewers, too, have heaped praise on Robert Cormier's work. You've seen many of them on the dust jackets of his books: *I Am the Cheese*, for example, was voted "Best Book of the Year" by the *School Library Journal*, and the *New York*

Times named it "Outstanding Book of the Year." Rave reviews have appeared in *The New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *Newsweek*, *Publishers Weekly*, and *The Horn Book*. He has also won various journalism awards—the associated Press Award for the Best News Story in New England, for example.

Reviewers of his recent novels like especially the building of suspense, the "shattering" outcomes. The *Boston Globe* used the terms "haunting," and "chilling." (Those same words, unfortunately, have been used over and over to describe some of the most prominent scary movies around: *The Shining*, *The Haunting*, *The Howling*, *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. . . . Bob's books certainly don't fall into *that* category of stories that "haunt" you or "chill" you.) But if you've read his books, you know the sense in which the *Globe* reviewer used them. Again we see the inadequacy of words to describe how marvelous these books have been.

One of the most overused, though accurate, terms terms employed to characterize these novels is ". . . uncompromising endings." "Uncompromising endings" has, unfortunately, become a euphemism for *unhappy, negative, downbeat*—meaning "the good guys lose." I prefer (and I'm sure Bob prefers) to see those endings as plausible, realistic, real-life endings . . . endings that make readers think far beyond the covers of the book.

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All good literature, in fact, makes readers think, reflect, re-examine beliefs. Robert Cormier's books certainly do that. *The Chocolate War* forces student readers to look at an aspect of the world as it often is—where Evil rules in places where Goodness and Purity are expected to be, where the bad guys are more clever than the nice guys, where heroes don't exist, and anyone who tries to be heroic is overwhelmed by the corrupt system. (It's interesting, though, that at the end of the novel, even after Jerry advises Goober—and all of us readers—*not* to rock the boat but to go along with whatever the system demands of you, most kids refuse to accept that. They seem more determined than ever—at least verbally—to want to fight back.)

Likewise, while reading *I Am the Cheese*, we slowly realize, through alternating chapters, that Paul Delmonte and Adam Farmer, the nice, American boy on the bike, and the terribly troubled subject of Brint's cautious but relentless psychiatric probing, are one and the same . . . and that life is sometimes not what it seems to be . . . and that nobody knows who the good guys in the government are . . . and once again the good guys lose, only this time *maybe* the nice, once-innocent kid will be "terminated."

And then, in *After the First Death*, innocent and once-trusting kids *are* killed, and patriotism and heroic acts are *not* rewarded, as the lives of three teenagers from widely different backgrounds—all three victims of a different kind of betrayal—face the consequences of their own actions and the uncontrollable actions of others. What is most frightening about the ending of this book is that Miro, the young, hardened terrorist, is still loose—out there somewhere, *right now!*

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Who *is* this guy who writes of such tension-filled, emotion-wrenching, value-questioning books? If you read Norman Mailer's books and then meet Norman Mailer, you have no trouble matching the image and the man. If you read Judy Blume's books and then meet Judy Blume, you say: "Ah-hah, sure, she looks just like a kid!" Where is this tough, scowling, hardened, bitter rebel? Speaking of "shattering," "shocking" revelations, the first time readers of his recent novels meet Robert Cormier they are amazed to find him so soft-spoken, so friendly, so personable, so generous, so honest. . . . This unsentimental novelist seems quite sentimental as a person. You've seen that warm sentimentality in his columns and in his short stories that deal with being a parent, with proud moments, tender moments, reflections, melancholy thoughts, and fantasies of being a hero—sensitive observations about Woolworths, the library, Monument Park, City Hall . . . from this eye-witness observer of Main Street . . . Fitchburg . . . Massachusetts . . . U.S.A.

And we discover, upon meeting him face to face, that not only is he not harsh, self-centered, tough-minded . . . but instead he is fearful of enough things to drive the average person off a bridge . . . except he's afraid of bridges and other high places, along with enclosures, dogs, and a lengthy list of other things. Plus he's an insomniac! Thank God for insomnia—for those dark hours seem to be the main times these characters come out of the woodwork. And so I hope no one ever says to Robert Cormier: "Sleep well."

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I met a writer several years ago who was just starting to be recognized. He was a kind man, sensitive, pleasant, other-directed. His reputation increased; his public appearances mushroomed; his fees went up. And so did his self-image. The last time I saw him speak, he spent more time telling people how wonderful he was than doing what he had been paid to do. Recognition, notoriety have never gone to Bob Cormier's head. He feels as honored today to be invited to speak to a group of librarians, or teachers, or kids as he did the first time anybody ever asked him.

He is as generous and as personable as I've ever

seen a man. He is so open to people that not only does he not have an unlisted telephone but he even published his number in one of his novels! (It's disguised as Amy's phone number in *I Am the Cheese*, page 198.) Not only that, I've heard that sometimes, when kids call that number to talk with Amy but settle for talking with him, Bob Cormier has offered to call them back so they don't have to spend their money!

The most widely used word I've heard people use who meet him for the first time is "gentle." Bob Cormier is a *gentle man*. I think he is that, truly.

All this attention, all this praise has not gone to this man's head, perhaps partly because of his philosophy about it. I've heard him say: "Wear your laurels lightly." *Wear your laurels lightly*. Well, wear *your* laurels lightly, Robert Cormier. But *wear* them, for no one deserves them more than you. ■

Bridgers, continued from p. 1

fort on my part. I should be writing, not explaining. If the work needs much explanation, it probably also needs re-writing.

And yet I am faced with this dilemma of content and meaning a third time. People want to know, sight unseen in unabridged form, what *Notes for Another Life* is about. I'm not sure yet—the reviewers have yet to make their pronouncements. This I can tell you. It is about a family. The father is mentally ill. The mother is mostly absent, crucially so. The daughter is growing up quite successfully, managing to be whatever is expected of her while also discovering who she is outside the family's influence. The son, a sixteen year old with more disappointments than he can handle, is the one in trouble, pushed close to disaster by a frustrating lack of control over his own life. The grandparents are trying to hold everything together and doing the best they can. It is a family in crisis but also a family with hope.

I think there will be questions about the mother, questions I probably can't answer. She will be both criticized and condoned. I don't believe that during the writing I ever took either position. I tried to express her attitudes, her weaknesses and strengths, her choices, by showing her behavior and that of her family toward her. I had moments of anger at her as well as times of empathy. I did not ask that she be perfect, though, because to know her I had to be tolerant of her just the way I found her.

This woman Karen, a mother who leaves her husband and children to pursue a career independent of her life with them, has brought into focus a very obvious chink in my intention to write about people as they relate to other people, specifically people in families. I really haven't written about women who are "good" or even adequate mothers—in fact, I hardly write about mothers at all.

A reader first brought this fact to my attention at a meeting of librarians, and I hummed and hawed about my affection for Mae Willis and about Maggie's fulfilling the role left by Mae's death in *Home Before Dark*. So at the end there was a family but also the haunting memory of a failure—a mother and daughter who never understood or felt much affection for each other. Those things happen. Life is like that. "But," my reader prodded, "what about Casey's mother?"

Well, I could and did say that the plot of *All Together Now* hinges on a mistaken identity. Casey must be new in town or visiting if Dwayne is to believe she is a boy. Here a conscious decision was made to have her visit her grandparents, putting the story in a useful time frame. At the end of the summer, she could go home. But why didn't her mother come with her? There were several possibilities. I used the mother's having a job and yet wanting her child to have a safe, happy vacation. But that still leaves us with a mother who never appears and a grandmother willing and able to take her place.

But is that really possible? Is Casey better off without her mother? Is Stella? Are Kevin and Wren, the teenagers in my new book, better off without the sophisticated woman who bore them in what was, it seems to them, another life? And here is the reckoning. I have had to take a look at my own attitude and in doing so have discovered what provides the only credible answer available to me. My mothers are absent because for me, motherlessness provides the ultimate, the all-consuming conflict. No matter what the relationship is, close or distant, strained or loving, mothers are still our source. They are perhaps the most unique and certainly the most complex attachment we will ever have.

Surely Casey's summer would have happened with her mother there. Surely Stella could have found a place to be without her mother's death. But for me, their absence makes every word more poignant, every step more stumbling, every question more difficult to answer.

In *Notes for Another Life*, the mother's absence is so crucial to the events in her children's lives that the book literally hangs on it. She speaks to us of the difficulties of being an adult both by her absence and by her presence. She reminds us that there are choices to make that don't result in perfect solutions. There can be loving mistakes which are both saving and selfish. The best I can say for Karen Jackson is that her children love her. Perhaps that is enough. ■

From Salinger to Cormier: Disillusionment to Despair in Thirty Years

Rebecca Lukens, Miami University, Oxford, Ohio

SOME years ago, 1951 to be exact, *The Catcher in the Rye* took reading Americans by surprise. The book said what adolescents were feeling, and what they thought no one knew but themselves: "Surely," adolescents think, "no adult can put into words our anxiety about our most intimate concerns. Furthermore, my concerns aren't quite like other people's. No one else is as troubled as I." But J. D. Salinger caught them all, all those anxieties and uncertainties. As if he had taken Erik Erikson's *Identity: Youth and Crisis* for his text, Salinger put his finger and his pen upon the conflict between idealism and realism, between hope and disillusionment.

Chronicling the quest of Holden Caulfield for people and experience that could verify his most optimistic wishes, Salinger shows the growing disappointment as Holden finds many of his idols standing upon feet of clay. And yet Salinger's hero, although he writes from a sanitarium, becomes a realist. Many of his idols have fallen, and his quest for perfection has left him with only ten-year-old Phoebe, whose innocence is still inviolate. But Holden will work himself out of his depression; by novel's end he is rising from it. His self-told story shows that within himself are the seeds of good. If there are others like him—and his millions of readers over thirty years prove that to be true—the world cannot be all bad.

Robert Cormier, on the other hand, begins from quite another premise. The world is rotten; the honest people flee; those who remain are corrupt; the government is ineffectual but controlling; organized violence is ubiquitous. There is no hope. Between 1951 and 1974 the world-view in popular literature flipped; it has gone from realistic *bildungsroman* showing youth's awakening awareness of evil, as Young Goodman Brown and Redburn discovered it, to another world view: The pervasive forces of the unseen and the sinister are in control. Hope is gone; despair remains.

Salinger

Look first at Holden's story. The by-word of his life is "phony." He decries phoniness wherever he finds it, expressing in his first few pages his disappointment in D.B.'s selling out to Hollywood. Big brother, writer of the great stories, admirer of Ring Lardner's tender-tough little tales, is writing for the most depraved of institutions. Although Stradlater "gives girls the time" in the back seats of cars, Holden mixes disappointment and scorn for him with genuine generosity tinged with envy. Holden dislikes pimply neighbor Ackley who disturbs his personal possessions and stinks up the room with unwashed socks. And yet Holden is compassionate, inviting lonely Ackley to the movies. Holden admits he's sexy and dreams of girls, but always stops at their "noes." He wants sexual experience—for when he marries—but he wants the purity of his admired Jane Gallagher to remain untarnished. He thinks an encounter with a prostitute would be useful, and yet a prostitute no older than himself who wears freshly cleaned frocks and doesn't smoke or drink saddens him. Besides, how can he do it with someone he doesn't care for? Had she been old and hard. . . .

Holden sees the phoniness in the school principal who talks to parents of rich kids and ignores those with rumpled suits and corny shoes. Holden is kind to his teacher, bent and dedicated Old Spencer, visiting him in his illness. When he seeks refuge with Antolini in New York, our hero fears that Antolini's tender touch is that of a homosexual—but he admires Mr. Antolini for caring about the student who jumped out of the dorm window and for caring about what happened to Holden. He dislikes the towel-flicking kid whose mother he meets on the train, yet he gives her what she knows she would like to hear: Your son's great, the best choice for class president. Sally Hayes is a fake, too; she seeks out the theatre-goers from the right schools and turns on a fraudulent charm. But Holden suggests that together they get away from the corrupt world and live in the virgin wilderness.

Holden talks at length with the nuns in Grand Central Station, worries about how hard it must be for them to read about seductive Eustacia Vye and the heated passion of Romeo and Juliet, and then gives them a donation in case they ever need one. He calls the elderly bellboy in the hotel a pimp, which he is, and yet he worries about how he can live on small tips, a bellboy all his life. He sneers at the extravagant mechanical Christmas pageant of the Baby Jesus at Radio City, yet remembers with tenderness the drummer in the orchestra, as well as the real message of a humble Jesus.

Incident after incident and character after character come into Holden's three-day account of his

dismissal from Pencey Prep and his clandestine return home. He never speaks ill of his parents, but sees them as loving and bumbling, his mother "nervous" after Allie's death, and his father growing too wealthy by honest work. It is Phoebe alive, like Allie dead, that gives Holden hope for the world. Phoebe, being young, is as yet uncorrupted. Allie, having died young, will never be corrupted. Because he finds so painful and disillusioning the discovery of imperfection, he would keep the young innocent forever. Holden wants to be "the cather in the rye," catching all of the roller-skating or museum-going children before they fall over the cliff into disillusionment.

Salinger speaks to adolescents in a way that is realistic and yet hopeful. His humor softens the discoveries of one human imperfection after another. His recognition of adolescent temptations and distractions keeps his story believable. Disillusionment, it seems, can coexist with tenderness and concern. Adjustments can be made to reality. Even the wounded can be compassionate and survive.

Cormier

"They murdered him." So opens Robert Cormier's *The Chocolate War*. The setting is the football field where Jerry, being tested by a vicious coach, endures attacks to knees, stomach, and head, a brutal battering without a helmet. We are immediately plunged into a world of physical brutality perpetrated by adults. Psychological brutailty is the domain of Brother Leon, who not only beats but humiliates his pupils, accusing "A" students of cheating. He appeals to honest Caroni to become an informer about the chocolate war; then he threatens him. Caroni, who wants his legitimate "A," questions, "Were teachers as corrupt as the villains you read about in books or saw in movies and television?" (p. 85). Two pages later, when he gives in to his teacher for the sake of his grades, Caroni becomes the informer. "And he did see—that life was rotten, that there were no heroes, really, and that you couldn't trust anybody, not even yourself" (p. 87).

Organized brutailty is the domain of The Vigils, fellow students who force Goober to dismantle the classroom so that its furniture crashes to the floor, and the shock sends Brother Eugene to a mental hospital. When The Vigils credit Goober with fifty boxes of chocolates he has not sold, he too gives in to teacher pressure, knowing he cannot face the punishment of The Vigils. Goober wills himself to feel nothing, not rotten, not traitorous, not small or cowardly; "then why was he crying all the way to his locker" (p. 150). Brutality opens Cormier's novel, and it crescendoes to unbelievable heights in the final beating. It envelops adult and adolescent; it shows no one with strength sufficient to withstand evil.

The source of the novel's conflict is, or seems to be, Jerry's wish to hold out against The Vigils, to disturb the universe by resisting evil. The real protagonist in the novel, however, is not Jerry but the villain Archie. By skillful use of omniscient point of view, Cormier makes us see Archie's compulsion to keep himself on top. To forestall his own defeat and to retain control of The Vigils and thus of the school, Archie must concoct one more, and one more vicious scheme. Archie must create the terror-producing plans, plans that use his club members for evil, then turn back upon them so that no one can win—save Archie. "It was good to have people hate you—it kept you sharp" (p. 106). All kinds of brutality keep Archie's control over The Vigils. When Rollo is dissident, challenging The Vigils who can't even keep a little freshman like Jerry in line, he gets a blow to the jaw: "Rollo's head snapped back—*snap* like a knuckle cracking—and he bellowed in pain" (p. 131).

In payment for his obstinate refusal to sell chocolates, Jerry suffers. In scrimmage, when he makes his assigned tackle and gets Carter, he suffers a blinding blow to the kidneys. To the macho society of Trinity School, the ultimate disgrace is to be called a fairy, and this Jerry suffers, too. At Archie's charge, Emile enlists the neighborhood children, a ruthless gang of evil tots; wanting to kill him, to blind him, they pile into Jerry, kicking him in the groin. Children, too, are corrupt and ruthless; they join the attack as hired assassins. Archie's Vigils will not suffer disobedience or defiance. They make silent phone calls to Jerry all night long. They call out to him, evening phantoms on the street. They destroy and clean out Jerry's locker so that he does not exist. Ignored by students and faculty alike, he is nothing, no one.

The violence and brutality of the chocolate raffle and the rigged fight conclude the bitter novel. What The Vigils have done to the school and to Jerry, "they would do to the world when they left Trinity" (p. 172). Greed and cruelty—the chance to win a hundred dollars and to see a bloody fight—control everyone. "That's why it works . . . because we're all bastards" (p. 175), explains Archie. Finally even

Jerry, the last holdout against evil, strikes out furiously and illegally in the ring at Emile in a "beautiful" blow. He is invaded by a "new sickness . . . of knowing what he had become, another animal, not disturbing the universe, but damaging it. He had allowed Archie to do this to him" (p. 183).

If *The Chocolate War* had not ended with Jerry's defeat but with the banishment of Brother Leon or The Vigils, or with an uprising that set things at least into a neutral or holding pattern, it would not end in despair. Instead, in the final pages of the novel Jerry wishes he could tell Goober "Don't try to disturb the universe. You can't." Brother Leon, who to serve himself manipulates kids and other priests, remains in power. There is no hope. Despair wins.

IN 1977 Cormier added to this tale of terror a second novel, *I Am the Cheese* (Dell, 1977). In a complexity of three interwoven levels, Cormier weaves a story of a boy's psychological search for his father with his search into his memories of the past. The novel revolves and circles in Adam's continuous and frustrating struggle to remember, mingled with fear of remembering. His search for his dead father cannot end; the novel opens and closes with the same paragraph: "I am riding the bicycle and I am on Route 31 . . . on my way to Rutterburg, Vermont . . . the wind like a snake slithering up my sleeves . . . But I keep pedaling, I keep pedaling." The circular movement of the novel is like "The Farmer in the Dell," the child's continuous and circular game. Throughout the story Adam, his father, and his mother sing the song, calling it the Farmer family's own song. The last verse is not sung until the final pages when psychologically damaged Adam, orphaned by the violent gangland murder of both his father and his mother, sings the last lines: "The cheese stands alone. . . . I am the cheese."

Early in the fantasy of Adam's search for his father, he hears that "it's a terrible world out there. Murder and assassinations" (p. 24). Such fears are only the beginning; they are followed by paranoiac fear of someone's stealing his bike, of homosexual overtures, of careening cars, of his mother's Never Knows, of a bomb on the accelerator, of strange voices that answer Amy Hertz's telephone. Endless fears. Throughout Adam's fantasies and memories run recollections of Amy's mindless mischief as cheerfully unmotivated as the violence of the young thugs and as unpredictable as Mr. Grey's comings, goings, and plans. Not until the final pages do we know that suspicious Mr. Grey is a legitimate government agent whose real task is to relocate prime witnesses.

The enigma of the novel is how much does Adam Farmer, once Paul Delmonte, know about his past, and more importantly, who needs to find out—Adam or the government. Adam's father, an investigative reporter, has uncovered important evidence of corruption and been given a new identity; the family has been relocated and lives in fear of discovery. Adam learns his parents' secret and must become a stranger to his school world. The normal reticence and isolation of adolescence are exacerbated by fear and puzzlement, then by distrust of Mr. Grey, and by absolute terror of attacking dogs and predatory young loafers. As the story moves back and forth between Adam's bicycle ride through his fantasy and his dialogue with the psychiatrist, we are exposed to the actual events of his life in immediate narrative. At the novel's end we discover that Adam is not being psychologically healed after all. The interrogation which seems at times humane and therapeutic is merely politically expedient.

The reader's puzzlement carries the novel along; our fears are never allayed. Adam Farmer/Paul Delmonte will never be able to live free of the annual interrogation, or to move outside the sanitarium walls. The disturbed adolescent who loves Amy Hertz and wants to love her forever is the same dependent child who clutches his stuffed animal, Poley the Pig. The government is vigilant; should Adam remember all and so be healed, he becomes dangerous. In the clinical records we see that Grey, Adam, his father and his mother are all merely numbers. No matter how healthy he might become, Adam will never be able to untangle himself from the maze of regulation and red tape. In his fantasy Adam continues his search for his father and keeps pedaling, keeps pedaling. In reality, he is only a series of digits in a government file.

The effect upon the reader is not merely fear, but often sheer terror—terror not only of cars and dogs and secret agents and theft and homosexual invitation, but of the endlessly connected underworld and of uncontrollable impulses to speak the forbidden or to discover what must be left undiscovered. Again Cormier has written skillfully, with plausible happenings and shocking attacks on the reader's sensibilities. The effect once again is that life is filled with sinister elements—government-related at that. There is no hope for the honest citizen in today's society. The forces of evil prevail, and despair is the winner.

CORMIER'S third novel, *After the First Death* (Pantheon, 1979), is another skillfully written narrative. This time Cormier poses two father and son combinations against each other, one ostensibly the good guys and the other the bad guys. As this tale unfolds, commitment to patriotism results in the suicide of the good-guy son and the assassination of the bad-guy father. Our sympathies lie with the American general and his victim son, and yet the

sacrifice of that son to the good of the state is no more admirable than the comparable sacrifice made by father and son on the other side of the conflict. Subtly, with all his artistry in building plot and portraying character in a brilliant style, Cormier once again gives us a sinister world. This time it is not the microcosm of a school dominated by evil in *The Chocolate War*, or of a wider American world controlled by the mobs in *I Am the Cheese*, but the international macrocosm of terrorism motivated by patriotism.

Briefly, the story opposes Inner Delta, the American secret defense agency administered by General Marchand, and the group of patriotic terrorists led by Artkin. Each of the two patriots has a son: Ben, son of General Marchand, and Miro, the "perhaps" son of Artkin. The American Ben is aware only that his father's work is secret, and knows that if he can help, he wants to. Miro knows no more about Artkins' organization than that it too is patriotic; his obedience is mindless and unquestioning. Ben is a human child acting out of love; Miro is an automaton acting out of intensive conditioning and training. Artkin confronts Inner Delta by taking hostage a busload of children and isolating them on a railroad trestle. Vulnerable Ben at his father's request acts as messenger in the negotiations for the hostages. Miro at his father's command earns his manhood by agreeing to murder while guarding the hostages. Ben breaks under torture by Miro's father, Artkin; feeling he has failed, he cannot look his father in the eye and kills himself. Miro, trying to save himself from Inner Delta's attack on the bus, fails to warn Artkin and is responsible for his father's death. The two survivors are the loving father who for patriotism has knowingly sacrificed his son and the terror-trained son who for patriotism agrees to murder but brings about his father's death.

Within the novel are several significant statements about values and motives, and questions about commitment and sacrifice. For example, suspicious Artkin hearing that General Marchand will send his own son on the dangerous assignment of emissary to the bus controlled by the terrorists, asks "Who knows about Americans? Perhaps they cherish their children more than their agencies?" (p. 204). Who knows? Perhaps. Not so. On the wireless Artkin and his counterpart General Marchand speak of the General's generous offer of his son. Artkin says, "Either you are a great patriot or a great fool." Ben's father thinks that Artkin knows

> exactly what I was. What I am. Just as I knew exactly what he was and to what lengths he would go. We knew each other across the chasm; we had recognized each other across the ravine, although we had never met (p. 193).

The two fathers are the same breed. Again, reminiscing about World War II, Ben's father speaks silently to Ben.

> We were poorly trained in those days, Ben, but trained superbly in one thing: patriotism. There are all kinds of patriotism; ours was pure and sweet and unquestioning. We were the good guys. Today there is patriotism, of course. . . . But this generation looks at itself in a mirror as it performs its duties. And wonders: Who are the good guys? Is it possible we are the bad guys? They should never ask that question, Ben, or even contemplate it (p. 134).

General Marchand advocates blind obedience to patriotic duty; it kills his son. Similar blind obedience to patriotic duty motivates Artkin as he trains his boy to torture and to murder.

We have always had tales of terror. For generations American adolescents have thrilled and chilled to Poe's gruesome and yet fanciful tales of men and women laughing diabolically at their systems for perpetrating a living death. Poe's characters, however, are mad, insane; readers marvel at Poe's ingenuity. George Orwell in *1984* creates another tale of terror, this time of a political stranglehold on people's lives. But in the allegorical style of the novel, this is a totalitarian state with language and institutions unlike our own. By using an unemotional narrator who reports happenings in a country different from our own, where an abstraction called Big Brother represents institutional surveillance, Orwell creates distance and objectivity. As for adolescent protagonists, William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* has Ralph who opposes Jack, reason and humanity opposing impulse and violence. Although oblivious to any comment on original sin, readers are struck by their own capacities to relate to both Ralph and Jack and are thus frightened at the potential for savagery they detect in themselves. But the fantasy island setting in a remote time permits readers at least to hope that in the here-and-now *they* would not behave with savagery.

Poe, Orwell, and Golding permit us to discover and to contemplate the evil sides of society and ourselves, to search within for the source and the placement of our sympathies, and to hope that we can withstand. Cormier, on the other hand, takes another view. He does not deal with the existential *angst* of humankind—the eternal issue. The immediacy of Cormier's situations, the feeling of "today," the skillfully portrayed reality of the particular evils in the "now," produce terror in the reader. Like Salinger, Cormier disillusions the adolescent reader, but unlike Salinger who offers discovery, Cormier offers only despair. ■

There Are More Than Mounties in the Provinces, Sgt. Preston

Mike Angelotti, Texas Tech University

In conjunction with its annual meeting this past May, the Canadian Council of Teachers of English sponsored day-long preconvention sessions devoted to children's and young adult literature. What follows is a summary of selected events focusing on young adult literature.

Monica Hughes: YA Science Fiction From A British Perspective

Author of such novels as *Crisis on Con-Shelf 10*, Ms. Hughes gave a most lucid talk on her writing process while keying on another of her books, *Keeper of the Isis Light*, for numerous examples. She noted that "Newton's laws must be obeyed," thus her research for each book is exhaustive, "with most of it thrown away." She writes at three levels: plot, theme, and mythic, which, she feels, appear as a natural consequence of the story being told, never contrived. It is important, however, that the story finish at thematic and plot levels. New characters gradually appear in her mind and talk to each other; when they speak loudly, the story is ready to begin. For the reader, "a journey into a good novel should be a parable of one's journey into life."

Her own favorite authors and works include Leon Garfield (*The Ghost Downstairs*); Rosemary Sutcliff, who writes of the far historic past and thus avoids two problems often confronted by YA writers: (1) creating a sufficiently heroic protagonist, because boys then of ages 10–12 were often considered men, and (2) the death of the adolescent protagonist, because deaths of past figures are non-threatening to young readers (*Sun Horse, Moon Horse*); and Alan Garner, a meticulous craftsman whom Hughes feels has raised the quality of adolescent literature immeasurably in the eyes of literary critics (*The Owl Service*). She appealed to teachers to read aloud to their students and suggested that a difference between U.S. and British adolescent literature is a greater sense of myth and fantasy in British writers.

Bonnie and Paul Zindel: Two Points-of-View on Writing for Adolescents

Bonnie Zindel discussed how she began writing and revealed some aspects of her writing process. For example *A Star for the Latecomer* is autobiographical and was written with Paul to take advantage ofhis professional guidance. Essentially pragmatic in approach, she learned screen writing by formula (filling-in-the-blanks), and approached *A Star* by listing ten emotional moments and writing to those. She outlined her second novel, *Coming of Age In A Dunebuggy*, by plot points and identified the reversal, then wrote to those points. Her process is mainly psychotherapeutic in that she identifies a problem, then writes to illuminate it. Believing that she must contain the energy of the book within her to be dissipated through writing only, she is not inclined to talk about a novel while she is writing it.

Paul Zindel focused on his "secrets of successful writing," which, in sum, are to know young people and to know how to write to them in a way that both communicates and is meaningful. For example, he identified self-esteem as *the* universal need, especially for adolescents. He believes that kids want some aspect of the school environment in their reading as a hook into reality. They reject us to find their own reality until they get in trouble. They need interesting language and romance and love honesty (they can see right through sham). They are intelligent (but not necessarily wise), love mischief, appreciate a few illustrations, want action and suspense, and like a good title.

About his title-making, Zindel revealed that he asks kids their words for things and hooks into the establishment in a fractured way (thus, *The Undertaker's Gone Bananas*). About obcenities, he argued that they are not artful in YA fiction and will not last; there is a better way to say it. Also, most kids don't feel comfortable about explicit fornication in print—only a small audience is really attracted by that. About audience, he selects one person to write to, always a different teenager. His object is to stay fresh by tapping new kids for each novel, living in their world of ideas. About teachers, he suggests that in selecting books for kids we should be asking, "What do books do for their awakening?"

Doris Bass: Tight Money And Censorship Threat Affect YA Publishing Projections

In her talk, Ms. Bass evaluated future trends in YA books as publishing houses are likely to respond to economic and public pressures. She commented that things today are different from a decade ago in YA literature. For one thing, the problems are run-

ning out. What is emerging is how to relate to adults and character growth novel. Further, the climate is against the "outrageous" book—people are nervous about teenagers and what they are into. Publishers tend to the "safe" book anyway, so that "wonderful" books will break into the YA market again. Thus, the age of realism will once more yield to the world of romance. There will also be more publication of books with less meat; the thin book will dominate.

Bass contends that economic pressures are also being felt from public libraries, the real support for YA books, which are receiving less money for purchasing books. This makes the publication of new books more difficult and chance-taking on new authors more risky. The economics of hardcover books and censorship, then, are likely to influence the content and form of YA novels to come. The age of "safe" books is nearly on us, even in the face of a 69% increase(Bass's figure) in YA paperback sales in 1980 of, I suppose, "unsafe" books.

On Futuristics, Reality, And YA Literature

My own contribution to the program centered on two talks: one, an analysis of possibilities for the art and teaching of YA literature in the eighties; and, the other, an examination of the notion that YA literature is a response to reality. Focus in both presentations was on the more strictly defined concept of adolescent literature as that kind of literature written for teenagers, having adolescent protagonists, and treating adolescent themes, settings, and subject matter. *The Outsiders* is an example.

Regarding the art of adolescent literature, I traced the historical development of it to the present dominance of the problem novel, predicting a movement toward a balance between the serious and lighter sides of adolescent life in YA novels, and an easing of censorship pressure after it peaks in the next year or two. After discussing relationships between adolescent needs and literary themes, I suggested that YA literature is an emerging literature featuring the novel and nonfiction forms; having the beginnings of a short story genre, very little drama, and virtually no generic poetry other than that which young people themselves write for school magazines and, perhaps, that which appears as popular song lyrics. It is an incomplete literature moving towards a full literature, with no reason to harbor an inferiority complex nor to apologize to anyone. It should not reach the complexity and literary sophistication of classic adult literature, for then it would have little reason for being.

Regarding the teaching of adolescent literature, I discussed a "collaborative" approach as one consistent with students looking to the 21st century. Basically, teachers and students together form the curriculum and select content. The teacher gives up no prerogatives, but students gain more ownership of the learning process and, consequently, are more committed to participating in it. Traditional literature is neither sacred nor purged, but is a natural consequence of student, teacher, and program needs. Nor is exposure and coverage a rationale for curriculum planning. Experiencing and responding processes are major targets, induction is the primary teaching process, and in-class reading of literature is allowed, in fact, is prerequisite. Ultimately, considerations of readability, choice, content depth, and provocative content create *interest*, a significant factor in the quality of both comprehension and personal response.

Also discussed in this paper were the basic arguments of proponents and opponents of adolescent literature as they relate to four major functions of adolescent literature in school programs: (1)*transitional*, bridging the gap between children's and adult literature for many students—allowing for continuous growth in literature reading ability, literary sophistication, and positive attitudes about reading literature; (2)*recreational*, providing readable and interesting material that offers narrative fiction and varieties of nonfiction to balance conventional school literature, teen magazines, comic books, television, film, and pop music; (3)*therapeutic*, allowing for a kind of therapy as students discover the universality of adolescence through vicarious experiencing of others' lives as one means of analyzing problems, examining alternatives, and deepening personal understanding; (4)*remedial*, providing a more humane medium for "below grade level" readers than elementary basal readers, workbooks, or reading kits. In general, arguments against the use of adolescent literature are dated and do not come from a reasonable understanding of the whole of young adult literature, nor of its recent vintage, nor of the adolescent as reader and citizen of the future society. Opposition to YA literature should lose its vigor at much the same pace as its aging opponents.

Finally, I suggested that the battle that needs to be won in this decade is the movement of adolescent literature from an incidental position in most programs in which it is used to a mainstreamed posi-

tion, particularly at the junior high level. Only then can the problems of sagging, even nonexistent, interest in reading and in reading literature (can they be separated?) be significantly addressed. In this connection, a most ominous note was sounded in a recent NCTE *Councilgram* when it reported a survey that revealed that the prevailing attitude of U.S. students about English classes had changed from apathy to hatred. That literature teachers will become curators of book museums by the new millenium may be more prophetic than overstatement induced by manic depression.

In brief, my second talk addressed the reality in realistic fiction as viewed by various interested parties: mainly adolescents, teachers, parents, and literary critics—noting inevitable conflicts among these groups due to differing backgrounds of experience and personal interests. This discussion led to analyses of how such factors as background of experience, purpose, and interest affect how one reads literature, or, indeed, whether one reads literature. Implications for program development were drawn from interaction related to these points and "features of a healthy literature program" were proposed to include: (1) accessibility to books, teachers, and other students; (2) a classroom paperback library of 300 or so books; (3) in-class reading time; (4) time for personal response and creative discussion; (5) a knowledgable, enhusiastic teacher; (6) some choice, meaningful oral reading, creative writing, and free written response to literature; (7) a balanced focus on learning to read literature and learning to appreciate its art. One conclusion, or, perhaps, pervasive concern of the session, was that if they can't (or won't) read it, nothing else really matters. ■

NONFICTION—ALAN'S News

Annual Breakfast Meeting

The annual meeting of the Assembly on Literature for the Adolescent of NCTE will be held in connection with a breakfast on Saturday, November 21, at 7:30 a.m. in the Sheraton Hotel's Grand Ballroom in Boston. Awards for outstanding contribution to Adolescent Literature will be made, and installation of officers for 1981–82 will be held. Following the breakfast, Robert Cormier, author of such books as *The Chocolate War, I Am the Cheese,* and *After the First Death,* will speak to the group. A full breakfast is planned. Tickets for the breakfast are $10 each and can be ordered by sending a check to Robert Small, College of Education, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Virginia 24061. Checks should be made out to ALAN. Mail deadline is November 2. It will not be possible to mail tickets requested in letters postmarked after November 2. Instead, they will be held at the door of the breakfast. Requests for tickets through the mail postmarked after November 10 cannot be honored, and all money mailed after that date will be refunded. The only guarantee of having a ticket is to purchase it in advance. No tickets will be available for sale in Boston. They must be purchased by mail.

ELECTION RESULTS

Dwight Burton, Chair of the Nominations and Elections Committee, reports that the following people were elected in the balloting conducted last spring and summer: Robert C. Small, Jr., President Elect; Mary Sucher, Treasurer/Membership Chair; Hazel K. Davis, Secretary; Alan McLeod, Arthea Reed, and Faith Schullstrom, Board of Directors. The installation ceremony will be held in Boston at the breakfast meeting.

Business Meeting Set

The ALAN business meeting will be held Saturday afternoon, November 21, from 5:00 to 6:00 p.m. as part of the scheduled activities of the NCTE convention in Boston.

FELLOWSHIP PROPOSALS CALLED

In order to encourage criticism and scholarship in the field of children's literature, the Children's Literature Association awards at least two research fellowships each year.

The fellowships are awarded to members of ChLA for proposals dealing with criticism or original scholarship with the expectation that the research undertaken will lead to publication and make a significant contribution to the field of children's literature. The awards which range from $250 to $1000 may be used for transportation, living expenses, materials and supplies, but not for obtaining advanced degrees, for creative writing, for textbook writing, or pedagogical projects.

The deadline for proposals is December 1, 1981, and the winners will be announced at the spring conference of the ChLA. For complete guidelines, please write:

Carol Gay, Chairman
ChLA Scholarship and Awards Committee
Department of English
Youngstown State University
Youngstown, Ohio 44555

CORMIER COLLECTION ESTABLISHED

President Vincent J. Mara is pleased to announce the establishment of The Robert Cormier Collection at Fitchburg State College. Robert Cormier has presented to Fitchburg State College the working papers of his more than thirty-five years of writing.

In the Collection will be the original drafts and manuscripts of Cormier's seven novels including *The Chocolate War, I Am the Cheese,* and *After the First Death,* short stories, taped speeches, private and professional correspondence, newspaper columns, and scores of memorabilia from his writing career. A permanent exhibit area will be open for student visits.

An announcement will be made of the opening of the Collection for researchers following completion of preservation and cataloguing work on the papers.

PHYLLIS ANDERSON WOOD WINS CSLA AWARD

Phyllis Anderson Wood has won the Helen Keating Ott Award, established by the Executive Board of the Church and Synagogue Library Association, for her significant contribution to children's literature. This award was given to Mrs. Wood for her nine young adult novels, and for helping children through books by dealing with life skills such as understanding, trust, courage, and interpersonal relationships. The two titles reviewed for the award were *Win Me and You Lose* and *This Time Count Me In,* both published by the Westminster Press.

Phyllis Anderson Wood is a specialist in reading and English skills. She has been a teacher in the Jefferson Union High School in Daly City, California, since 1966. Mrs. Wood is dedicated to providing reading opportunities for young people with difficulties in reading and English skills. All of her novels have sprung from her own teaching experiences with students and their needs as she has observed them.

SCOTT O'DELL AWARD ESTABLISHED

An Annual award of $5000 has been established by Scott O'Dell for the best book of historical fiction published each year for children and young adults. The award will be given for the first time in 1982, for a 1981 book, if one meritorious enough has been published.

The award will be called The Scott O'Dell Award for Historical Fiction. Mr. O'Dell is a writer of many distinguished books in that field, a Newbery Medalist, a three-time Newbery Honor Book Winner, a two-time winner of the German Jugendbuchpreis, winner of the deGrummond and Regina Medals, and recipient of the Hans Christian Andersen Author Medal, the highest international rec-

THE SELF AS THE SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE: A Philosophical Study of the Identity Theme in the Adolescent Novel

Wallace Beasley, Alice Lloyd College

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine whether or not, in the adolescent novel, the protagonist's search for identity recapitulates the larger search for identity theme that has influenced past movements in philosophy, religion, and world literature. The general identity theme was broken down and examined in terms of three categories: the search for self theme, the rebel-victim theme, and the loss of innocence theme. As a background for an analysis of these themes in the adolescent novel, the author first established a philosophical overview in terms of Socratic philosophy, Sophoclean drama, Old Testament and classical myths, Zen Buddhism, modern existentialism, and the tradition of the Byronic hero in English literature. A background section was also included on the philosophical history of the problem of identity as it evolved through the thinking of Parmenides, the German Idealists, and the modern phenomenologist, Martin Heidegger.

The novels selected for analysis were from a list of nine books dealing with adolescent identity, a list recommended by the January 1979 issue of *English Journal*, in its annual "Books for Young Adults Book Poll." The novels were Lynn Reid Bank's *My Darling Villain*, Gunnel Beckman's *That Early Spring*, John Bowers' *November . . . December*, Hila Golman's *Sometimes I Don't Love My Mother*, Charles P. Crawford's *Letter Perfect*, Alice Hoffman's *Property Of*, Irene Hunt's *William*, Norma Klein's *It's O.K. If You Don't Love Me*, and Ursula LeGuin's *Very Far Away from Anywhere Else*.

The major conclusion of the study was that the contemporary adolescent search for identity, as depicted in the nine novels selected for analysis, does indeed recapture the same kinds of universal human concerns and experiences that were dominant in past philosophical, religious, and literary movements, although the social context and the quality of the identity experience varied greatly from novel to novel. *Very Far Away From Anywhere Else, That Early Spring, November . . . December*, and *It's O.K. If You Don't Love Me* were found to contain significant elements of the know thyself theme as it was manifested in Socratic philosophy, Sophoclean drama, Zen Buddhism, and existentialism; *My Darling Villain* and *Sometimes I Don't Love My Mother* were found to reflect important elements of the same rebel-victim theme that prevailed in *Prometheus Bound*, in *Manfred* and *Cain*, and in the paradigm of metaphysical rebellion articulated in Albert Camus' *The Rebel; Letter Perfect* and, to a lesser extent, *William* contained significant aspects of the loss of innocence theme as it was depicted in the Adam and Eve myth and in *Paradise Lost*. In fact, *Letter-Perfect*, in several instances made direct reference to *Paradise Lost* as a thematic backdrop for the loss of innocence theme as it unfolded in the novel itself.

In general, the adolescent identity experience involved a threefold process: first, the adolescent perceived personal freedom as being limited by some sort of external authority; second, the adolescent rebelled against that authority; third, the adolescent served to usher in a new measure of moral or intellectual awareness. In all the novels examined, authentic identity was depicted as flowing or being created from within; none of the adolescents found identity in churches, schools, or social groups.

ognition for a body of work by an author of children's books. He has chosen to establish the award to encourage other writers—especially new authors—to focus on historical fiction and thereby give young readers books that interest them in the historical background that has helped to shape their country and their world.

To be eligible for the award, a book must have been published in the previous year, as a book intended for children and young people. It must be set in the New World (Canada, Central or South America, the United States), and written in English by a citizen of the United States.

The selection will be made each year by the members of the Advisory Committee of the Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books, who will serve as a jury chaired by Zena Sutherland, editor of the BCCB and associate professor in the Graduate Library School, University of Chicago.

WORKSHOP SCHEDULED

"Adolescent Literature: Past, Present, and Future" is the theme of the seventh ALAN workshop in conjunction with NCTE's national convention to be held Monday and Tuesday, November 23–24, in the Sheraton-Boston Hotel. The fee is $30.00 for NCTE members and $35.00 for nonmembers. Registration will be available on site, but only those who preregister can be guaranteed a packet of books and workshop materials.

The 1981 workshop features talks by Paul Zindel, Lois Lowry, Hilma Wolitzer, Joan Aiken, Todd Strasser, Maureen Crane Wartski, H. M. Hoover, and Walter Tevis. Group discussion leaders will include Dwight L. Burton, Joel Taxel, Richard Abrahamson, Ellen Kester, Natalie Brooks, Audena Linda Cowin, Don Nilsen, and Arthea Reed, who will focus on such topics as "Pre-1966 Adolescent Novels Still Worthy of Attention," "Historical Fiction in the Classroom," "Dramatic Duos: The Secondary Classroom a Stage," "Nonfiction for Young Adults," "Humor in Adolescent Literature," "New YA Novels Worth the Reading Time."

Also featured on the program are presentations by the 1981 *Books for You* Committee, chaired by Robert Small, and by Ted Hipple and Bruce Bartholomew on "YA Novels and the Classics." Concluding the workshop will be a panel discussion on "The Future of Literature for Adolescents," featuring Suzanne Coil, Avon Books; Melanie Kroupa, Atlantic Monthly Press; Sheila Schwartz, YA author and English Education professor; and W. Geiger Ellis, editor of *The ALAN Review*. Alan McLeod will serve as moderator.

Bantam Books will host a wine and cheese autographing party in honor of participating authors on Monday.

ALAN Task Force Launches Study

As I review the literature for a study of adolescent literature use and teaching in the U.S., one conclusion is becoming increasingly clear. There is very little collected data available from which one can draw a national picture of what is actually happening in adolescent literature teaching today. One can gather fragments. Nilsen and Donelson, Gallo and McCaffry, and Abrahamson, for example, have conducted surveys of college teaching of adolescent literature. Purves has teamed with various colleagues to research aspects of literature teaching in general. Numerous persons have polled reading interests and choices. Individuals and state NCTE affiliates have surveyed the state of the art in their own backyards. I have encountered a few of these, although many local studies must exist that are not disseminated nationally.

One especially provocative one by Patricia Aubin, reported in the *Connecticut English Journal*, surveyed a sampling of Massachusetts teachers. Many of the questions Aubin asked are also concerns of the ALAN Task Force. Her results, though not painting a bright picture, suggest a starting place for describing the state of the art and, when all of the data is in from the ALAN study, directions for improving literature education. For example, Aubin reports that most Massachusetts English teachers (9–12) select their own books but seldom choose YA novels for intensive study; they perceive YA literature as inferior, and seldom read YA books.

It would seem that we who know adolescent literature need somehow to educate our colleagues. An unpublished Nebraska study, on the other hand, suggests that teachers of that state feel overinserviced in YA literature, yet 37% of them "seldom, if ever" use it, and only one adolescent novel made the top 24 list of novels taught in class (it was ranked 22nd!). Clearly, a national study is needed to gain some perspective on the state of the art and to establish a positive course of action for the future.

The ALAN membership can help in the study in at least these ways:

1. Volunteer for the task force. Enrollment is open. There is a lot to do. I would like to have it set by January.
2. If you have or know of studies or surveys related to adolescent literature, please send me a copy or a lead.
3. Aubin's "areas of interest" (p.2) is a good beginning list for ALAN as well:
   a. teachers' personal knowledge of the Young Adult Novels
   b. particular types of students with whom Young Adult Novels might be used
   c. whether teachers actually use Young Adult Novels in their intensive reading programs
   d. limitations that teachers might experience in book selection
   e. teachers' relationships with school and public librarians
   f. teachers' use of professional journals and involvements in professional conferences
   g. teachers' use of book clubs
   h. the availability of Young Adult Novels in classrooms and school libraries

Send in other suggestions.

Survey will be at least one technique used to gather data. Thus, you will likely receive one during the spring. Please respond to it with great commitment and due haste.

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